■ James Fallows on Peggy Noonan at the White House

■ Plus reviews by Michael Kinsley and Robert B. Reich

The Washington Monthly

EBRUARY 1990/$3.00

POST PATERNALISM OR BLACK BLACKMAIL?

WHY *THE WASHINGTON POST* ENDORSED MARION BARRY THREE TIMES

by Scott Shuger

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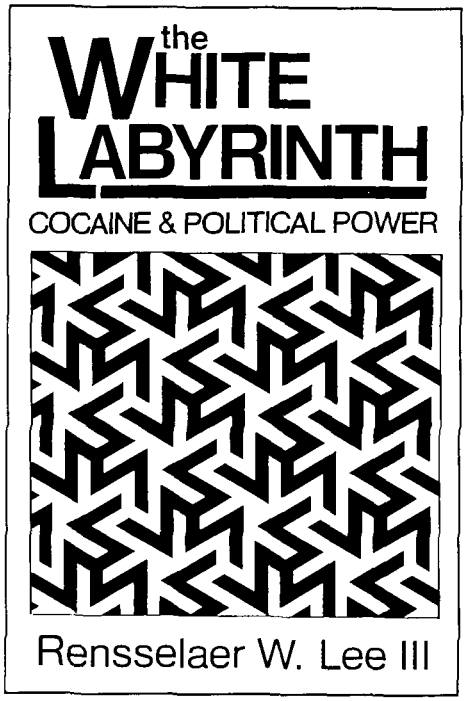

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COCAINE AND POLITICAL POWER

Rensselaer W. Lee III

This book is an in-depth examination of a problem that is of paramount public concern - narcotics trafficking. Cocaine imports have increased five-to tenfold from 1977 to 1987, and abuse of cocaine and its derivative "crack" has become a serious social dilemma in the U.S. By exploring the economic and political pressures in producing countries, *The White Labyrinth* explains why effective action is so difficult. It analyzes the devastating pressure tactics of "coca lobbies" and cocaine trafficking syndicates, it explores the complex relationships between the cocaine industry and leftist revolutionary movements, and it reveals the unexpectedly negative consequences of actions taken by Washington.

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The Washington Monthly

Volume Twenty-Two, Number One February 1990

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LETTERS

Class dismissed

What particularly irks about Patricia Cohen's review of my book *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS* ["Sex, Lies, and the Underclass," November] was her continual assertion that, as she put it, "he's most certainly wrong to insist that heterosexual AIDS doesn't exist as long as white, middle-class suburbia is free from it" and "he seriously *underplays* the heterosexual epidemic that continues to devastate Hispanic and black America." My goodness: The entire thesis of my book is that the threat to the white, heterosexual middle-class is grossly overstated, thus understating the homosexual and minority underclass problem. Cohen grants that I spent an entire chapter on the special problems of the minority underclass; what would she have the reader think I was writing about? Actually, I cited no fewer than 12 different sets of statistics in this chapter showing how great the minority AIDS problem is compared to that of whites. Further, the special problems of minorities are mentioned throughout the book. The problem with crack is mentioned not once in the book, but three times, which happens to be three more times than any other book I have seen on AIDS.

Can any person honestly paint that as ignoring the minority problem or being insensitive to it? That Cohen would in order to discredit my book is consistent with her apparent belief—and that of the mainstream American media in general—that when it comes to AIDS, deception of the public is justifiable. One suspects that when it came to the secret bombing of Cambodia or the secret funding of the contras, Cohen's attitude was different. When you don't tell the people the truth and the whole truth, you're lying. It's that simple.

MICHAEL FUMENTO
Denver, Colorado

The author replies:

As I wrote, Fumento does focus on the problems of Hispanics and blacks in one chapter. It's a good chapter, but it's still only one—out of 23. (It's also the one place where he mentions the crack-AIDS nexus in the body of the book; the other references are confined to the appendix.)

Mr. Fumento now claims that the book's "entire thesis" is how the focus on white, heterosexual middle-class cases of AIDS hurts minorities. Really? That's not what he wrote in the book's introduction and first chapter. There he states his purpose is to explore the intrusion of politics into science and how it caused the American public to panic over an epidemic that never existed. The only time he mentions Hispanics or blacks in these opening pages is to say "The deaths of homosexuals and drug users were supposed to be a mere portent of things to come; instead, they would, for the most part, be all that was." All that was? No wonder then that Fumento thinks we are devoting too many resources to AIDS.

Indeed, the title says it all. Why is it a myth if there is an epidemic among poor urban blacks and Hispanics? Presumably, because white, middle-class people don't have it.

South by southwest

Liza Mundy properly notes the importance of the Head Start preschool program ["The Success Story of the War on Poverty," December]. In doing so, however, she badly mischaracterizes a fine, predominantly middle class, northeast Washington neighborhood.

There is no neighborhood "near the intersection of Florida Avenue and Benning Road, in southeast Washington." The neighborhood that I'm familiar with, near the intersection of Florida Avenue and Benning Road in northeast Washington, doesn't resemble the neighborhood described by Mundy. I live there, as do many other middle-class Washingtonians. Contrary to the ghetto-like description of my neighborhood provided by Mundy, the neighborhood that I see is constantly improving. The already successful Hechinger Mall, located at the intersection of Benning and Florida, is planning to expand. Few houses are boarded up, and many are in the process of renovation and restoration. H Street is in the midst of dramatic improvement.

Liza Mundy and your editors reveal their personal biases and limited frame of reference by writing that "it's hard to imagine a barbecue in this neighborhood." Of course, many of us enjoy having a barbecue with family and friends, and it is silly to assume otherwise.

Why can't we discuss need-based programs without reference to erroneous negative stereotypes and generalizations? Is it because the predominantly white middle class will only fund need-based programs if motivated by guilt?

WILLIAM A. DAVIS
Washington, D.C.

The author replies:

Mr. Davis is right to point out that the intersection of Florida Avenue and Benning Road lies in northeast Washington, not southeast as I indicated. Understandably, though, he has mistaken the neighborhood I was referring to: a stretch of blocks just south of Benning Road and east of 15th Street that does not include his address. Even so, his comments prompted me to revisit the area and see whether I mischaracterized it. Directly across from the

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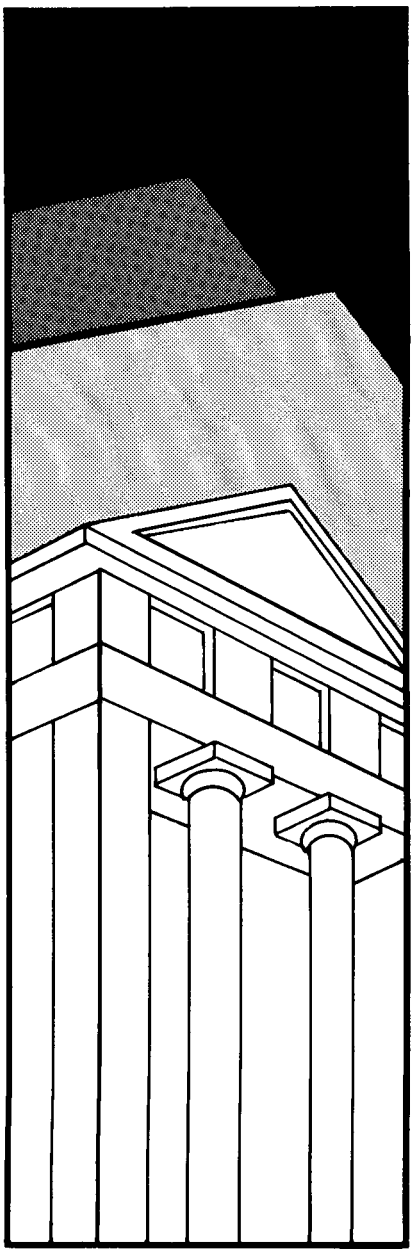

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National Child Day Care Association—which sponsors the Head Start program I discussed—stands a large, abandoned, boarded-up house. There are more than a few deserted buildings in the nearby area, and others with yards full of debris. It's true that there are renovated homes there as well, so while this still looks like a tough place to grow up, his points are well-taken.

I smiled when I read Liza Mundy's article about Project Head Start, in which she blandly stated that January 1965, when Sargent Shriver conceived the plan for Head Start, was a time when "public kindergarten was virtually nonexistent and preschool unheard-of outside of a few experimental programs."

I went to public kindergarten in the D.C. suburbs (maybe with Sargent Shriver's kids) in the late 1950s, and my mother went to public kindergarten in New York City in the 1920s. Our experiences were hardly vanguard. I didn't go to preschool, I admit: we called it nursery school then.

I suspect this error got into print because the editors and/or writer were either greenhorns (1965 being ancient history) or grey-beards (1965 being so far past their or their kids' kindergarten years that no alarm bell sounded). Maybe the *Monthly* needs more middle-aged manpower.

MICHAEL L. MILLENSON
Chicago, Illinios

The editor replies:

This grey-beard is embarrassed. There was a kindergarten in 1932 at Mercer School in Charleston, West Virginia. I know because I was a pupil for a few days before I discovered that school attendance was not compulsory in West Virginia until the first grade.

Trashed novels

One of the most lamentable trends of the last decade has been the unholy alliance between the "we know what's good for you and we'll make you do it" liberals and the "we know what's right and we'll make you do it" conservatives. The spectacle of Jesse Helms climbing in bed with Andrea Dworkin to save us from dirty books, of teetotaling fundamentalists and Mothers Against Drunk Driving saving us from demon rum, of Tipper Gore and the religious Right saving us from the devil's music (rock and roll), of blacks wanting to burn "Huck Finn" joining with whites who want to burn Kurt Vonnegut, to name a few, is just grotesque. Now comes Scott Shuger ["Paperback Fighter," November] to join the line of "wanna be" book burners to decry Tom Clancy as the latest threat to the safety or morality or character of the nation. Appalling.

Taking Shuger's argument to its logical conclusion, we should be proscribing any book that violates Mr. Shuger's view of what the world should be like, lest voters and policymakers become infected by bad ideas. I'd rather put up with George Bush in a world safe for Tom Clancy than live in Mr. Shuger's paradise of controlled thinking.

FRED FACHET
Warrenville, Illinois

The Washington Monthly

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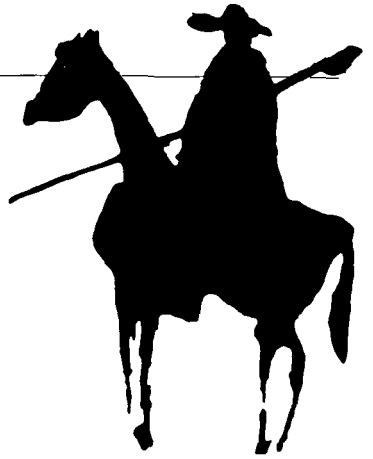
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



If you doubt that our attitudes have undergone considerable change in recent years, consider that the featured film on two leading cable movie channels on Christmas Eve was not *It's a Wonderful Life* or *A Christmas Carol* but *Big*, which beguilingly and with warm approval describes a sexual relationship between a mature woman and a male who, although temporarily overgrown, is only 13 years old. . . .

Could there be a connection between these two facts: (1) Pennsylvania has the highest auto insurance rates in the nation, and (2) Pennsylvania is one of only two states that pays for the insurance for its legislators' cars. . . .

The Eden Press features books on how to protect your privacy. It even has a Privacy Catalog. But before you send away for it, you might be interested in knowing that Eden Press will turn around and sell your name and address as part of its mailing list, which it peddles through a list broker called Conrad Direct. So a book on how to protect your privacy will result in an invasion of it by junk mail. . . .

Why were U.S. troops unable to find Noriega? The answer may lie in the fact that the CIA wasn't telling the Pentagon what the CIA's agents in Panama knew. This explanation was buried deep in a *Washington Post* article that headlined an almost meaningless revelation that "U.S. Troops May Have Seen Noriega Escape." Here is what the *Post*'s editors thought was less important than the possible sighting:

"Some of the intelligence gaps in the Panama invasion represented a failure of the military to tap the resources of the Central Intelligence Agency, whose network of agents in Panama had gathered information that was not available to the southern command.

"One congressional leader explained that the CIA is responsible for collecting human intelligence from agent networks and forwarding it through the CIA station chief to CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. *There is no mechanism for sharing such intelligence, even when it bears on military matters, with the Pentagon*" (emphasis added by *The Washington Monthly*). . . .

The advance purchase airline ticket, the kind that must be used only on the date of the reservation or the discount will be lost, has become the latest threat to government efficiency. In December, I wrote about a top bureaucrat at the Federal Energy Management Agency, who, because he had such a ticket, left on vacation the day after the 1989 San Francisco earthquake. Now I learn that Rep. Les Aspin missed the crucial last six days of the 1989 session because he, too, had such a ticket. So while his colleagues were wrestling with catastrophic care, budget reconciliation, and other major legislation, Aspin was lolling on the beaches of Hawaii. . . .

"BEARING THE BURDEN OF BEING THE BLACK MAYOR OF THE WHITE MAN'S PLANTATION" was the headline of Courtland Milloy's column in *The Washington Post* on the Sunday after Marion Barry's arrest at the Vista Hotel. In it, Milloy, who is black, claimed that Barry was a victim of racism. His argument is one of the best illustrations of the problems produced by the interaction of the *Post*'s paternalism and black militancy that Scott Shuger explores in this issue. Milloy's racism charge is based on the following evidence:

"Inside the District Building, Barry was treated like a king, with a private elevator, cook and kitchen. Women came to him for innocent hugs and kisses. His limo had an emergency red light that flashed through town non-stop.

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"But whenever that car crossed the geographical boundary known as Capitol Hill . . . . we could see people scrambling to open doors for members of Congress . . . . But I was embarrassed to see Barry totally ignored when he walked into a government building . . . ."

Barry, Milloy continued, actually had to beg for money "with his hat in his hand."

Why didn't at least one editor at the *Post* tell Milloy that this is what happens to every luminary, white or black, who leaves his suite in the executive branch to seek appropriations on Capitol Hill? Anyone who has taken that trip knows it is a lesson in humility that has nothing to do with race.

I suspect it *is* true that the District of Columbia's status in the federal system is at least in part a product of racism, but the rest of Milloy's argument is just plain silly—absurd enough to have been caught by any reasonably intelligent editor. Instead the author was indulged with the special treatment of having his column run across the top of an entire page of the first section. This is not the equal treatment that the *Post* should be giving blacks on its staff or in the community. . . .

Whatever else might be said about the eighties, one thing is clearly true. They made the rich a lot richer. What are they going to do with all that money? My guess is that many of them haven't even begun to think about the question. For them I have several suggestions:

First, give it to entrepreneurs who are trying to create jobs, produce better products, and give better service. As we have pointed out, Wall Street doesn't help such people until they are well along the path to success. The search for money in the early days of any enterprise is always difficult and often desperate.

Second, give it to colleges and universities that are actually doing a better job. Don't put old Siwash in your will just because you went there, do it because Siwash has cut out the deadwood on its faculty and administration, emphasized good teaching, lowered tuition, and required its graduates to have mastered a common core of literature and history and science and mathematics.

Third, donate money to the public school systems and to charities, but only on the basis of demonstrated commitment to improved performance, to quality teaching, to delivery of food and money and health care to those who are in need.

Finally, I would remind Congress that to the extent these rich people don't dispose of their wealth, let's be sure the public gets it through a substantial estate tax. This tax was decreased in 1981 from $298,800 for an estate of $1 million to $153,000. There was no good reason for the change. If we simply restored that tax to its old level, we would cut the deficit by $15 billion over the next four years. . . .

The ways private industry cons the Pentagon are myriad. One, recently uncovered by Senator Charles Grassley, is the "labor support" charged to contracts. For example, for a computer it took machinists and assemblers 16,381 hours to put together, E Systems billed the government for those hours *plus* 187,000 of support labor, including more than 25,000 hours of "management" time. . . .

"AT&T Announces More Staff Cuts." Such headlines became common during the eighties as American corporations undertook long-overdue surgery on their swollen bureaucracies. Unfortunately, nothing similar happened in government. As we have frequently pointed out, the federal bureaucracy grew under Ronald Reagan instead of dramatically decreasing, as he had promised. The fat remains. There's even more of it.

My own experience in the bureaucracy suggests that it could safely—that is, without endangering key functions—take the 50 percent cut that James Bennet recommends for the officer corps in his article beginning on page 22 of this issue.

To give you an idea of how much fat there is in the government, *The New York Times* recently reported that the "support staff" for our embassy in Nicaragua consists of *320* employees. Support staff means drivers, clerks, household servants. Why on earth would we need 320 in such a small country, or for that matter in any country?

It is important, however, that the cutting be done intelligently. Since more than $50 billion in back taxes remain uncollected, the IRS obviously doesn't have the people to do the job. So you have to be concerned when you hear that it is continuing a freeze on hiring new employees that has already lasted 15 months.

In general, such freezes on new hiring are not a wise way to reduce staff. Under a freeze, you don't fill a job, not because you have determined that it is useless but simply because it has become vacant. This approach pleases present employees because none of them will be fired. But suppose some of them are doing next to nothing all day while a person whose resignation creates one of the vacancies that won't be filled may have been doing something truly important.

I go on at length about this because just as we are going to

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press with this issue, it has been announced that Dick Cheney plans to use a freeze to make personnel cuts at the Pentagon. The cuts are a sound idea. The freeze is not. Dick Cheney is smart enough to know better. . . .

If you doubt that real racism lingers in our society, consider the *San Jose Mercury News*'s exposure of incompetent interpreters in the California courts. More than two-thirds of the state's 2,000 interpreters have either failed a competency test or have never been tested. This deprives the hundreds of thousands of Hispanic and Asian immigrants who live in California of their fair day in court. But no one cares enough to change the system. If this isn't racism, what is it?. . .

Which reminds me of another -ism—age-ism. How else can you explain the stupid rule that requires airline pilots to retire at age 60! Recall Captain David Cronin, who flew that crippled United 811 back to Honolulu and then had to retire a month later. Ponder the dismaying fact that Captain Alfred Haynes, who made that miracle landing in Sioux City, will have to retire next year. And then consider the fuzzy-cheeked incompetents who are regularly flying commuter planes into mountain sides. What we really want are competent pilots, regardless of age. If they don't have the reflexes, if their minds are a bit addled, throw them out, whether they are 30 or 60. But if they're Cronins or Hayneses, for Heaven's sake keep them. . . .

One of the most conspicuous characteristics of the rich people I have known is their desire to avoid hassle. They expect their money to insulate them from the indignities the rest of us endure trying to hail a cab on Third Avenue or exchange a defective sweeper at Sears. The irony is that, because they do succeed in avoiding most of the hassles, the few that are inescapable tend to drive them around the bend. . . .

As a part of their continuing education program, North Carolina lawyers are required to take a course in legal ethics. So you can understand the appeal of this announcement from the North Carolina School of Law:

What's Better than Watching
Tar Heel Basketball?
and
Satisfying your *Ethics credit*
at the same time!

Following the seminar on ethics, reads the announcement, "will be the UNC-DePaul basketball game. . . . Each participant is entitled to a ticket. . . . There will be shuttle buses before and after the game.". . .

Speaking of *It's A Wonderful Life*, I can't think of any hero on television today that has the sense of duty to his fellow man that the Jimmy Stewart character had in that movie. And where are the Mr. Smiths that go to Washington to do good? The person who tried to do the right thing in those days was fortified in his resolve by the sense that the good he did might be rewarded by the love of a Jean Arthur or a Donna Reed. I can attest that the total effect of the movies of the thirties and forties was to engrave deep in my mind the conviction that the right girl would admire me, not if I made money but if I tried to be Mr. Smith.

Today's potential Mr. Smiths receive no such support. We have "L.A. Law" encouraging bright people to go into the law where they aren't needed instead of having shows that glamorize the dedicated teachers and scientists and entrepreneurs and public servants that this country so desperately needs. . . .

Something else to whiten your knuckles the next time you're an airline passenger: After a fire caused by a dangerous chemical in the cargo hold of an American Airlines plane injured 16 people last year, the shipper admitted that he had put the same chemical on 11 previous flights. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the FAA has just three staff members

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One wonders, however, why the brochure contains this paragraph:

"Marriott Corporation, Executive Edge, and National Support Services and their officials and employees incur no liability for any consequential damages arising from the classes.". . .

Back to the dreadful impact of "L.A. Law" and the values it expresses: The number of lawyers in the city of New York rose from 49,386 to 77,890 in the last decade. That's in New York alone. . . .

For the reader who is old enough to remember John Connally and who shares my distaste for the former governor who deserted the Democratic party to join the Nixon administration, there are some marvelous quotes about him in James Reston's new biography, *The Life of John B. Connally*. One was that his "was the only known instance in recorded history of a rat swimming *toward* a sinking ship." Another, by Liz Carpenter: "It's a good thing John Connally wasn't at the Alamo. He'd be organizing Texans for Santa Anna." From LBJ: "John Connally doesn't have even the tiniest trace of compassion. He can leave more dead bodies on the field with less remorse than any politician I ever knew.". . .

Back to that *Post* story about how the CIA and the Pentagon don't share secrets. The article ended with an account of the army's dramatic rescue of a CIA agent from a Panamanian jail during the invasion. What was the agent thinking as the soldiers unlocked his cell? It must have been something like, "I can't tell these dodos anything, but boy, will the fellows back at Langley be excited by all the news I have for them.". . .

I can't believe it! The 600 hymns in the new Presbyterian hymnal will not include "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." This outrageous decision was made secretly by an 18-member committee. If democratic procedure had been observed, the two hymns would have surely been in the top ten selected by members of the church.

Certainly the opportunity to sing such rousers was more than a negligible factor in my climbing out of a warm bed on Sunday mornings to attend the First Presbyterian Church in Charleston, West Virginia. The prissy complain about the martial language of "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." But I can assure them that of the hundred or so kids who sang them with me at Sunday school, only one could possibly have been called militaristic. We weren't thinking about slaughter on the battlefield, we were just having a wonderful time singing. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

"STOP THEM DAMN PICTURES"

That's what "Boss" Tweed demanded when he saw the handwriting on the Hall (Tammany, that is). But the pictures didn't stop. "Boss" Tweed met his maker in the Ludlow Street Jail and Thomas Nast put bitingly eloquent political cartoons squarely and permanently in the middle of American political life. Tweed aside, we think Emerson had it right when he said, *"Caricatures are often the truest history of the times."*

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Flying the Unfriendly Skies

The benefits of deregulation are almost too numerous to mention: high prices, old planes, bad maintenance, and layovers in Newark

by Larry Eichel

One recent Friday evening, David Brown boarded United Airlines Flight 103, nonstop service from Philadelphia to San Francisco. So did Andy Skibo, Don Seigrist, Brad Weaver, and Judith Benson.

David Brown sat in coach. So did the others.

He dined on California lasagna and beef roulade. The others did, too.

But there was one major difference between David Brown and his fellow passengers.

David Brown paid $586 for his seat.

Andy Skibo paid $483.

Don Siegrist paid $358.

Brad Weaver paid $229.

And Judith Benson, one row in front of Brown and just across the aisle, paid $124.

"It's an amazing thing," said Brown, a sales representative for a California wine company, shaking his head, "The mysteries of airline pricing are unbelievable." This array of prices, one of the most wide-ranging in the whole American marketplace, is the direct result of an experiment launched by Congress 11 years ago. The experiment was called airline deregulation.

The idea was that there would be more airlines. In fact, today there are fewer. The theory was that there would be more competition. In a lot of places, there is less. The expectation was that the airlines would compete primarily through ticket prices. For the most part, they don't. The promise was that there would be better service. To many passengers, air travel has never been such a hassle.

Larry Eichel is a reporter for The Philadelphia Inquirer, *which published his five-part series on airline deregulation last December.*

Lords of the skies

In deregulating the airlines in October 1978, Congress decided to stop treating the industry as a public utility. No longer would the government tell the airlines what routes they could fly and what they could charge, as it had for 40 years. The carriers, and the marketplace, would make those decisions.

For a time, deregulation worked just the way its champions had predicted. New airlines popped up all over, and consumers reaped the benefits of spirited competition. Air fares declined, service increased, and the number of passengers mushroomed. But those days are gone. Today nearly all of the upstart, low-fare carriers have disappeared, along with some long-established ones—more than 200 casualties in all. Their assets have been redistributed by bankruptcy courts or gobbled up in a wave of merger mania that reached its crest during Ronald Reagan's second term.

Now there are eight "mega-carriers"—American,

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Delta, Northwest, Pan American, Texas Air (the parent company of Continental and Eastern), TWA, United, and USAir—and there are rising fares.

Average domestic air fares increased by 12 percent in the first half of 1989 compared with the first half of 1988, according to the Air Transport Association, the industry's trade group. Fares have been rising faster than the cost of living for the past two years. While budget fares remain available to vacationers willing to lock in itineraries far in advance, business travelers have seen fares on their discounted tickets rise 47 percent just since last fall, according to Runzheimer International, a travel management firm.

Those unregulated fares—along with the ongoing array of airline mergers, consolidations, takeovers and bankruptcies—have spurred debate about whether the time has come for the government to reassert some control. "The issue is not deregulation or re-regulation," said Senator John C. Danforth, the ranking Republican on the Commerce, Science, and Transportation committee, an intervention advocate. "The issue is lack of competition." The trend in the airline industry is toward a marketplace controlled by the large and the few.

"The fact that we have fewer carriers is obviously of concern to me," says Secretary of Transportation Samuel K. Skinner. "I don't like the fact that we're losing airlines. I don't like the fact that there's some feeling in the industry that we've got less competition than we had before."

Only two significant airlines formed after deregulation have survived—America West and Midway—and they account for well under 3 percent of the national market. "Big won, small lost," said Vance Fort, senior vice president of World Airways. Small is still losing. Presidential Airways filed for bankruptcy protection last October. Braniff Airlines suspended passenger operations in November. And no new carriers of consequence are on the horizon. "If you are looking to come into this business today as a new carrier, you're out of your mind," says George James, president of Airline Economics, a Washington-based consulting firm. "The barriers are so high. You can't put together enough in the way of resources to get a full running start."

The effect is clear, as Wall Street demonstrated with a vengeance last year when stocks of the largest airlines, which posted record profits in 1987 and 1988, soared and became subject to frenzied wheeling and dealing.

Some of the advocates of deregulation originally believed that the old, established airlines would fail to adapt to the new environment and rapidly become extinct. A few did fade away. It took the others a while to adjust. But eventually they figured out how to turn their bigness into an asset by creating a new game in which only they could afford to play. "The field was open, and they could make the rules," said Chris Witkowski, who heads the Aviation Consumer Action Project, an organization funded by Ralph Nader. "There was no understanding of the marketing devices that would be developed and no will to keep them in check."

> Fares have risen faster than the cost of living and are higher now than they would have been under the fare-setting formulas imposed by the government before deregulation.

The major airlines poked gaping holes in the two theories on which airline deregulation was based. One theory was that there was no inherent advantage in bigness, no "economies of scale." The other was that the mere threat of competition on a route was enough to keep fares in line.

The carriers destroyed these suppositions by creating an intricate web of marketing devices to attract and hold customers—regardless of ticket price. Devices so radically different from anything that had come before that a whole new language had to be invented to describe them: Frequent-flier programs. Computer reservations systems. Yield management. Commission overrides for travel agents. Hub-and-spoke route systems.

These marketing devices served two fundamental purposes: They deterred price competition among existing airlines, and they discouraged the formation of new competitors.

By working in concert, they have created a market in which there is little incentive for a traveler to patronize a new airline, or for an investor to finance the venture in the first place.

The airlines set up hub-and-spoke route systems to capture traffic and dominate regional markets. They

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locked up airport departure and arrival gates with 40-year leases so that, in some cases, there literally was no room for competitors to come in.They took nearly all the landing slots at the four airports where the government limits air traffic—Chicago's O'Hare, Washington National, and New York's Kennedy and LaGuardia—thereby limiting the ability of any new entrant to set up a national route system.

And they bought up other airlines to eliminate competition and to achieve "critical mass"—the size and reach they needed to survive in the world they had created. Northwest consumed Republic, its prime competitor in Minneapolis-St. Paul. TWA merged with Ozark, its rival in St. Louis. Delta gobbled up Western. American absorbed Air Cal. USAir consumed Piedmont, Empire, and Pacific Southwest. And Texas Air bought Eastern, Continental, People Express, New York Air, and Frontier.

Unnatural selection

The big airlines used control over information, rooted in their computer systems, to help kill off the low-fare carriers that seemed to be the wave of the future in the early years of deregulation. The demise of People Express, the best known of the low-fare operators, was "a classic, textbook case of information technology as a competitive weapon," said Donald Burr, that airline's founder. Information technology—the capacity to assemble and manipulate complex combinations of fares and schedules—gave airlines the ability to target different ticket prices to different kinds of passengers with remarkable sophistication and precision. Only the established airlines had enough money to put that technology to use. It allowed them to match the low fares of the upstart carriers on a selective basis, thereby taking away those carriers' reason for being.

"The computer is such a refined tool for pricing," said Louis A. Marckesano, who monitors the industry for Janney Montgomery Scott, a Philadelphia-based investment firm. "It allows a rifle-shot approach that can be deadly." That approach continues to this day, allowing the major airlines to limit price competition among themselves—even on routes where they do go head-to-head.

This past fall, four major carriers—American, Continental, Delta, and United—were operating 22 daily nonstop flights between Denver and Dallas-Fort Worth, a distance of 654 air miles. All four charged the identical coach fare, $300, one way.

Why didn't one of the airlines drop its price and grab the business? "If I know that if I cut my fare $20 today, you're going to cut yours $20 tomorrow, then it's stupid for me to do it," said Randall Malin, executive vice president of marketing at USAir. "Why would I do that?"

Some airline executives—and some economists—argue that the airlines had no choice but to insulate themselves from unfettered price competition. They say that the product being sold, the airplane seat, has one distinctive trait that makes such competition inherently destructive—its perishability. An unsold seat becomes worthless the moment the plane departs. At the same time, the actual cost of putting someone in that seat at the last minute is almost nothing—just the printing of a ticket and the providing of a meal.

"We went through a period of bashing each other's heads in over fares," said James Lundy, a spokesman for Delta Airlines, looking back at the early years of deregulation. "It took us a while to learn how to compete."

One lesson the deregulated airlines quickly learned was that they did not have to charge every passenger the same fare for comparable seats on the same flight, as they had to when the government set the fares. Or charge the same fare on every flight to the same city. Or even charge similar fares for flights of similar length. They set up a new fare structure designed to separate the business traveler who has to fly—and whose fares are usually paid by a company—from the vacation traveler who, if the fares are too high, will drive to the shore rather than fly to the West Coast.

The average airline fare, when adjusted for inflation, is slightly lower today than in 1978. It should be noted, though, that average fares declined slightly in the decade before deregulation as well. The post-deregulation average is the combination of two pricing trends: Sharp declines for travelers who can book their trips far in advance—declines which have made flying more accessible to people with modest incomes—and sharp increases for people who must make their plans at the last minute.

Full coach fares are high, as anyone knows who has had to rush off on short notice for a business meeting or family crisis. So are fares to small towns. Both types of fares have risen faster than the cost of living and are higher now than they would have been under the fare-setting formulas imposed by the government before 1978. And business passengers have found themselves more and more often paying full fare or something close to it; the industry eliminated the most widely used business discounts in the fall of 1988. Economists and lawmakers worry that diminishing competition will cause fares to rise even more quickly in the future.

The number of people traveling on airlines has increased about 65 percent since 1978, fulfilling the promise that deregulation would make flying accessi-

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ble to the masses. The number of flights is up about 35 percent.

But it could be argued that much of the increase in air traffic would have happened anyway—that it is more a result of economic prosperity than of deregulation.

Besides prices and volume, something else is up—public dissatisfaction.

Survey after survey has found widespread unhappiness with the experience of flying. Those surveys indicate that the people who travel the most are the most upset. They complain about poor service, delayed flights, aging airplanes, higher fares—and about how often they have to make a stop and change planes to get from one place to another. That is the result of one of the most dramatic changes of the deregulation era—the airlines' push to build up their hubs.

Lambert International Airport in St. Louis is the main domestic hub for Trans World Airlines. And anyone who happens to be there at 9 a.m. gets the impression that all the commercial jets in the world belong to TWA—and that all of them are within view. Thirty-some jets of varying size and type—each painted white with red stripes, each bearing the airline logo—stand motionless at their gates, noses in, tails out, engines off.

Meanwhile, inside the terminal, 4,000 travelers are playing commercial aviation's version of musical chairs. They have flown in from 30 points east of St. Louis—Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, Newark and New York, Tampa and Toledo. And most of them are headed for destinations west of St. Louis—Los Angeles and Little Rock, San Francisco and San Antonio, Denver and Des Moines. By ten o'clock, those TWA jets and passengers are in the air, headed west. The airport is empty—no planes, no people. And it stays that way for a few minutes, until the next group of planes descends on Lambert.

Systems like Lambert's are at the heart of the debate over airline deregulation. Nearly every major carrier has adopted a hub-and-spoke route structure: That's a system in which an airline offers one-stop service between hundreds of pairs of cities—the spokes—by funneling passengers through a central airport—the hub.

The problem is that once a carrier establishes a hub and becomes dominant at that airport, the airline can use its economic power to keep others out and to create a virtual lock on the local business. And there is considerable evidence that airlines convert such dominance into higher fares. Which explains why some travelers who live in the St. Louis area feel they have become the hostages of TWA, which does 82 percent of the airport's business.

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

Journalism Award

for November 1989 is presented to

John Crewsden
The Chicago Tribune

Crewsden spent 20 months sifting through the controversy between the National Institute of Health's Robert Gallo and scientists from France's Pasteur Institute over the discovery of the AIDS virus and ownership of the patent of the first AIDS test. After the French mounted an apparently unbeatable lawsuit, the U.S. moved to settle the dispute, eventually producing an agreement naming Gallo and the French co-discoverers and co-inventors. Crewsden shows that the "scientific history" of AIDS research that emerged from this agreement is a work of fraud. He reveals strong evidence that Gallo—still celebrated as the virus's discoverer by a press mystified by the scientific world—cheated, lied, and possibly even stole to place himself in the history books and in the running for the Nobel Prize. The story shows how scientific competition, aggravated by national politics and individual conceit, can corrupt and hamper research, even when the common enemy is horrifying.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation. Please send nominations to Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. Two copies of the article or broadcast text should accompany the nomination.

The award for stories published or aired in December will be announced in the March issue. Nominations for stories published or aired in January will close February 15. The winner will be announced in the April issue.

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"I resent it bitterly, and it's more than an issue of money with me," says Hal Kroeger, who runs a paper products distribution business from offices in suburban Florissant, and is so frustrated that he is considering having his company lease a private jet. "In the last three years, we've seen less courtesy, less reliability and much higher fares. And the service is as bad as the fares. The impact of having a monopoly is so deep."

These troubles aren't limited to St. Louis and TWA. USAir has 92 percent of the business in Charlotte, North Carolina, and 86 percent in Pittsburgh. Northwest Airlines has 84 percent in Memphis and 79 percent in Minneapolis-St. Paul. American Airlines has 70 percent in Nashville, Tennessee, and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. And Delta has roughly three-quarters of the market in each of Cincinnati, Salt Lake City, and, most significantly, Atlanta, the largest hub in the South.

> USAir has 92 percent of the business in Charlotte, North Carolina, and 86 percent in Pittsburgh. American Airlines has 70 percent in Nashville, Tennessee, and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. Delta has roughly three-quarters of the market in each of Cincinnati, Salt Lake City, and Atlanta.

Three other hub airports—Dallas-Fort Worth, Denver, and Chicago O'Hare—are controlled by two carriers apiece. American and Delta share 89 percent in Dallas-Fort Worth; United and Continental together have 85 percent in Denver; American and United jointly have 80 percent at O'Hare.

At several others—including Detroit Metro, Houston Intercontinental, Chicago Midway, Newark, Syracuse, Dayton, Baltimore-Washington, and Washington Dulles—one airline controls more than half the traffic.

"The problem is concentration at individual airports causing lack of competition," says Senator Danforth. "When you're up to 82 percent, as we are [with TWA] in St. Louis, how much worse can it get? I'd say that's intolerable."

Study after study has shown that passengers beginning or ending their trips at most of the nation's 35 hub airports pay higher fares. One analysis done for the Boeing Company last year showed that average fares to hub cities were nearly twice as high on a per-mile basis as flights going through the hubs. Severin Borenstein, a professor of economics at the University of Michigan, reached a similar conclusion, as did Morton Beyer, president of Avnark Inc., an airline consulting firm. Last year, the General Accounting Office studied 15 airports dominated by one carrier and reported to Congress that—surprise—those airports had 27 percent higher fares than airports of similar size that did not have a dominant airline.

"I used to be able to fly to New York for $180 round trip," said Alice Burgess, whose St. Louis company makes medical videos. "Now it's $592, and that's with a seven-day advance purchase and a 25 percent penalty for changes."

"The fare to Boston is unbelievable, and Philadelphia is very high, even if you're willing to take connecting flights. It just doesn't pay us to work in those cities. There's no one competing with TWA on any of those routes. This is a monopoly, and it's just not fair," she said.

Some early advocates of deregulation recognized the possibility that fares would get out of hand on monopoly routes. There were provisions in the original version of the deregulation bill—language ultimately deleted by Congress—that would have imposed price ceilings on routes where a single carrier had 90 percent or more of the traffic.

Airway robbery

If you live in a hub city, your reasonable options often begin and end with the dominant airline. In St. Louis, that is TWA.

TWA has a monopoly on nonstop service between St. Louis and 54 destinations, among them all three airports serving metropolitan New York, all three airports serving the Washington, D.C. area, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Boston, Hartford-Springfield (Connecticut), Orlando, Miami, Tampa-St. Petersburg, New Orleans, Phoenix, Las Vegas, San Diego, and Seattle. Before deregulation, TWA had nonstop monopolies on only six of those routes.

It is not just that TWA now accounts for 82 percent of the total St. Louis market and 62 percent of

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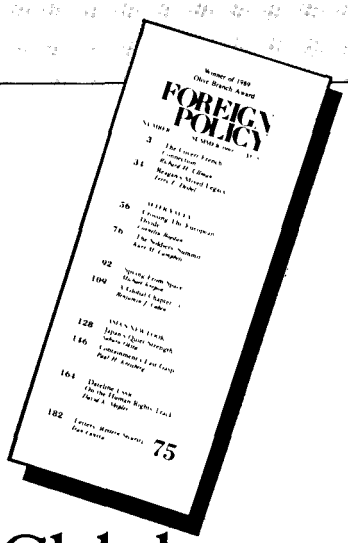

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the passengers for whom St. Louis is the origin or destination. Flights that pass through or begin or end in St. Louis account for nearly 80 percent of the airline's entire domestic system.

The other major airlines offer St. Louis residents what amounts only to token service: they operate a few flights a day between Lambert International and their own hubs. In fact, the number-two carrier in St. Louis is Southwest Airlines—a low-fare carrier that offers no food other than peanuts, no assigned seats, no connections with other, bigger carriers, and no service east of Detroit. And Southwest has only 3 percent of the market.

Rarely do the major airlines invade hubs already dominated by other carriers. They prefer, instead, to expand their own hubs or create new ones at airports they can dominate. "The risk of trying to compete at another carrier's hub is enormous," Transportation's Shane said.

That explains why American Airlines, when it decided to expand its north-south route system a few years ago, chose to set up two medium-sized hubs in Nashville and Raleigh-Durham, rather than one big hub in Atlanta—Delta's stronghold.

"Two hundred flights a day for a carrier coming into Atlanta may not make you competitive," explains Al Kolakowski, vice president for sales at Delta Airlines. "Two hundred flights in Nashville makes you king."

A wing and a prayer

Ever since Congress enacted airline deregulation, lawmakers have repeated these words as if they were a mantra: "Congress didn't deregulate safety." Indeed, the Airline Deregulation Act eliminated only the Civil Aeronautics Board, the agency that passed judgment on routes and fares, not the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which concerns itself with operations and maintenance.

But deregulation has had an impact on safety. Inadequate government oversight has allowed the increase in passengers to strain the nation's air travel system severely.

- Hundreds of jets built in the mid-1960s are still flying, years beyond their design lives.
- Experience levels of pilots and mechanics have dropped, and airline executives wonder where they will find the crews of the future. The military, the traditional source of pilots, is producing fewer at a time when the airlines need more.
- Pressure on the air traffic control system has increased. The system suffers from outmoded computers and too few controllers.
- Flight delays have become routine. The system's way to ease the strains imposed upon it is to make planes sit on the ground and wait.

The FAA has come under criticism as too ponderous and inflexible a bureaucracy to adequately monitor a dynamic and growing industry. "The rules under which the FAA operates may be perfectly acceptable for building a Veterans Administration hospital in Kerrville, Texas," gripes Herbert D. Kelleher, chairman of Dallas-based Southwest Airlines, "but not for a high-tech aviation industry that functions 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and changes from minute to minute."

"I think it's fair to say that the airlines, in the rush to merge, acquire, or expand, did not put safety at the top of their ladder of considerations," admits James Oberstar, chairman of the House Public Works and Transportation subcommittee on aviation. "Safety wasn't neglected, but it wasn't the highest priority."

The result has been a decline in public confidence in the airlines. A Roper Poll conducted in the fall of 1988 found that fear of flying was higher than at any time since deregulation began in 1978.

And yet, while the system has been strained, it has not broken. The safety record of the major airlines has been better in the decade since deregulation than in the prior decade. Fewer people have died in airplane crashes in the 1980s than in the 1970s, even though the number of people flying has increased by two-thirds. The overall accident rate for the past 10 years is about half what it was for the previous 10, according to the National Transportation Safety Board—even though 1989 was one of the industry's worst years in this decade.

"The system is bulging at the seams, but the record shows that it is the safest in the world and has never been safer," claims Transportation Secretary Skinner. "I can't see where deregulation has had any impact on safety."

But Arnold Barnett and Mark K. Higgins of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology studied all the safety numbers and reached a slightly different conclusion, one that meshes with the opinions of several independent experts. "One can plausibly contend that safety has improved despite deregulation," they concluded, "and would have improved more in the absence of the policy."

Like other aspects of the airline industry under deregulation, safety often comes down to a matter of dollars and cents. "I think we've reached a point where airlines that make higher profits are safer airlines," asserts John Galipault, director of the nonprofit Aviation Institute. So the higher fares and increased profits of the last two years should mean that more money is now available for new planes and quality maintenance—at least for American, Delta,

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Northwest, United, and USAir, the five most profitable major carriers.

But other airlines—Pan American, TWA, and Continental—are not doing too well. And one of the healthier carriers, Northwest, has just taken on several billion dollars in added debt as the result of a leveraged buyout. United, the object of an unsuccessful takeover attempt earlier this year, may yet be headed down a similar path. Or consider Eastern Airlines. Even before Eastern was crippled by the mechanics' strike last year, it had lost passengers and revenue as the result of charges from its employees that the airline was cutting corners on maintenance and overworking its pilots—thereby putting safety at risk.

And this is all happening in a generally healthy economy. When the next recession comes, all the airlines will be tempted to further cut corners on maintenance—and to delay the overhaul of old planes and the purchase of new ones.

The real fruits of deregulation could be just such a total breakdown of service and safety. Two Democratic senators, Howard Metzenbaum and Robert C. Byrd, have introduced a bill that would put the government back in the regulation business. "I don't know if complete reregulation is the answer." Metzenbaum said. "But I do know it's time we owned up to the fact that airline deregulation was a mistake. Unless Congress steps in, airlines will continue to pilot the industry toward disaster." □

WHO'S WHO

In evaluating the Bush cabinet, Washington's insiders award their lowest ratings to **Manuel Lujan**, **Dick Thornburgh**, and **Lauro Cavazos**. The latest on Cavazos and his wife, **Peggy Ann**, who readers will recall likes to stay close to her spouse, is that, because Peggy Ann can fly free on TWA, where her son is employed, the secretary of education's travel plans incorporate an unusually high proportion of TWA flights. "Lauro and Peggy Ann will," according to our favorite Cavazos watcher, Charlotte Hays, fly "all over the map to stick with TWA. A delay? Well, the two have been known to fly through a passel of airports and devote the better part of the day to travel to avoid buying a ticket for Peggy Ann."...

Another cabinet member whose reputation is in danger is **Edward J. Derwinski** of Veterans' Affairs, who tried to nominate as inspector general of his department one **Raymond "John" Vogel**, whose previous performance as the department's chief benefits officer was so marginal that Derwinski had decided to replace him. This reminds Washington observers of **Richard Darman**'s appointment of **Janet Hale** to oversee HUD for OMB after Hale, while a HUD official, had ignored warnings that something was a bit amiss in her department....

William Webster is said to be in peril of replacement at CIA by a president who never wanted him there in the first place. The only thing that may save him is that Bush's two favorite candidates for the job, **James Lilly**, the ambassador to China, and **Donald Gregg**, the ambassador to South Korea, could not be confirmed by the Senate without having to answer embarrassing questions—in Lilly's case, about Bush's policy toward China, and in Gregg's, about Bush's Iran-contra connection, which Gregg, as national security adviser to then-Vice President Bush, knew better than any other person....

For those who have wondered how anyone could afford to serve as an "unpaid campaign manager" in a major campaign, we offer the example of **Ron A. Ober**, who while performing that role for **Dennis DeConcini**'s 1988 reelection campaign, received more than $80 million in unsecured loans for his firm from Lincoln Savings and Loan even though the firm had assets of no more than $2 million and liabilities of about $200 million....

In—*Agriculture:* Assistant Secretary, Administration—**Adis Maria Villa**. *Commerce:* Assistant Secretary for Technology Policy—**Deborah Wince-Smith**. *Defense:* Assistant Secretary, Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence—**Duane Perry Andrews**. *Housing and Urban Development:* Assistant Secretary, Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity—**Gordon H. Mansfield**. *Justice:* Deputy Attorney General: **Donald Belton Ayer**. *Energy:* Assistant Secretary, Nuclear Energy—**William H. Young**. *Transportation:* Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration—**Jerry Ralph Curry**. *Treasury:* Treasurer of the United States—**Catalina Vasquez Villalpando**. Inspector General—**Donald E. Kirkendall**. *Veteran Affairs:* Assistant Secretary for Acquisition and Facilities—**David E. Lewis**. *Agencies and Commissions:* Director, ACTION—**Jane A. Kenny**. Chairman, Consumer Product Safety Commission—**Jacqueline Jones-Smith**. Commissioner, Commodity Futures Trading Commission—**William P. Albrecht**. Inspector General, Nuclear Regulatory Commission—**David C. Williams**. Assistant Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency—**James M. Strock**.

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Deductio Ad Absurdum

Want a government subsidy of $225,000 a year? Buy a mansion.

by Peter Dreier and John Atlas

When President Bush unveiled his new housing program last November at a National Association of Realtors convention, the news media focused on his plans to aid the homeless, assist public housing tenants who want to buy their apartments, and provide matching grants to cities for housing rehabilitation—an extremely modest initiative totalling about $1.2 billion per year in new federal housing funds.

Especially modest given that during the Reagan years, the homeowner tax break was the only housing subsidy that did not fall to the budget axe. Housing assistance for the poor shouldered the most severe cutbacks of any domestic programs—a 75 percent reduction from $33 billion to under $8 billion. Today, less than one-third of all low-income Americans receive any kind of housing subsidy. This is the lowest level of any major industrial nation.What reporters downplayed or ignored was the president's brief comment confirming his continued support for the homeowner tax deduction—a $34 billion annual federal subsidy that primarily benefits the wealthy.

Eliminating this tax break for the rich—while preserving it for the middle-class—could provide substantial money to finance housing assistance for low-income families, reduce the deficit, or fund other needed government programs.

To achieve this progressive tax reform will require Congress to overcome powerful political and ideological obstacles. The major political obstacle to reform is the real estate lobby—particularly the national associations of realtors, homebuilders, and mortgage bankers. Their political action committees have a vast local network and deep pockets. The housing industry argues that the homeowner tax break is the linchpin of the American dream. Without it, they argue, many Americans—including many young families—could not afford to purchase a home. Few congressmen want to offend these generous campaign contributors or be labeled as anti-homeownership. In fact, 245 members of the House of Representatives last year endorsed a resolution, sponsored by Rep. Marge Roukema on behalf of the housing industry, pledging their support for the existing homeowner tax break.

The real estate lobby, however, is engaged in ideological overkill. No one wants to repeal the entire homeowner tax deduction. But it can be reformed so that it primarily benefits poor and middle-class home buyers, while eliminating an expensive and unnecessary tax subsidy for the rich.

What's all the fuss about?

The federal tax code allows homeowners to deduct all property tax and mortgage interest from their income taxes. This will cost the federal government $34 billion in lost revenues this year alone, according to the Joint Taxation Committee. This amount is more than four times Bush's HUD budget for low-income housing.

The homeowner deduction is a government subsidy that goes primarily to the affluent. Over 78 percent of the foregone tax revenue goes to the 15.1 percent of taxpayers who earn over $50,000. One third of this subsidy goes to the 3.1 percent of taxpayers

Peter Dreier is director of housing at the Boston Redevelopment Authority and a board member of the National Low-Income Housing Coalition. John Atlas is president of the National Housing Institute.

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with annual incomes over $100,000. One half of all homeowners do not claim deductions at all. Tenants, of course, don't even qualify.

In other words, our nation's housing subsidies disproportionately benefit homeowners with high incomes or with more than one home. For example, Senator John D. (Jay) Rockefeller of West Virginia will receive a tax subsidy worth about $233,000 per year just on his $15.3 million Washington mansion. This amount would provide rent subsidies for about 5,000 low-income tenants—roughly the size of the homeless population in the nation's capital.

"I have no objections when the deduction goes for houses," says Rep. Sam Gibbons, senior Ways and Means Committee member. "When it goes for castles, I do."

Every president since Herbert Hoover has made home ownership a fundamental part of this nation's promise of prosperity. In the postwar period, the rate of home ownership in the U.S. rose steadily for three decades, from 44 percent in the late 1940s to 65.6 percent in 1980. Most of that increase was due to postwar federal housing programs, particularly long-term, low-interest, high leverage mortgages insured by the Federal Housing Administration or guaranteed by the Veterans' Administration. Cheap suburban land, subsidized highway construction, and rising income all contributed to the postwar boom. Only in the past decade—as housing prices skyrocketed, household incomes failed to keep pace with inflation, and federal housing programs were cut—has home ownership declined.

The homeowner tax deduction was never designed to be the costly element of housing policy that it has become. According to Marc Weiss, a Columbia University professor currently writing a book on the history of home ownership, the deduction grew almost by accident. By the time Brookings Institution economists began suggesting in the 1960s and 1970s that the homeowner deduction was inequitable and unnecessary, real estate lobbyists were already declaring it sacrosanct.

The impact of the homeowner deduction in promoting home ownership is debatable. Neither Canada nor Australia have a homeowner deduction, and the homeownership rates are roughly the same as the U.S.

If anything, the deduction has helped push hous-

A Hard Tax on Hard Work

Even while the government is giving more money to the rich for their houses, it is taking more money away from working people. Recently, the Social Security payroll tax, which disproportionately hits low-income wage earners and small businessmen, was raised again. The following item is excerpted from a column Jodie T. Allen of The Washington Post *wrote pointedly exposing this injustice:*

Nobody seems to complain much about the payroll tax, even though it is now a far heavier burden on the average worker than the personal income tax and a far bigger drag on industry's ability to compete in foreign markets than the corporate income tax. There was no taxpayers' revolt last November when Congress and the administration, in a little-noted departure from the "read my lips" rule, slipped into law an added boost to this month's payroll tax hike even though it was totally unneeded to pay for Social Security benefits.

Contrast that muted reaction with all the hoopla—the chilling denunciations of the "politics of envy"—raised last fall, when House Democrats toyed with the idea of raising marginal income tax rates on the wealthiest Americans to the same higher level already faced by families with far less income. Or the fight to cut the capital gains tax paid by investors even as the payroll tax on workers rises. If the average American doesn't mind being suckered, why should policy makers care?

They should care because Congress and the president are supposed to be looking after the public interest—not figuring out how best to fool it. And the fact is that the public has been fooled into accepting the most regressive tax structure among Western nations.

"Supply-side" economics advertised tax cuts, but, in fact, the tax burden as a whole has not changed over the eighties. What has changed is that the proportion of revenue coming from progressive income taxes has declined, while the payroll tax, which reaches only the lower part of earnings and doesn't touch investment income at all, has soared by about 25 percent. As a result, as Brookings Institution economist Joseph Pechman, the longtime dean of experts, wrote shortly before his death last year, the tax system actually makes the U.S. income distribution less rather than more equal.

This, Pechman observed, is even more troubling because the distribution of income in the United States, already far more unequal than that of our leading competitors, has become substantially more so in the last 10 years. History shows that nations that allow their wealth to become concentrated in the hands of the few prosper in neither social nor economic ways. □

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ing prices artificially up, because home buyers include the value of the tax subsidy in their purchase decision. It provides upper income home buyers with a tax shelter, encouraging them to view homeowning primarily as an investment, and to buy bigger homes, and more homes, than they need. And it certainly fueled the past decade's wave of housing speculation and the conversion of affordable apartments into expensive condominiums, promoting the gentrification of many urban neighborhoods.

What to do?

Two proposals make the most sense politically and economically. Both preserve the benefits for the broad middle class. Both close tax loopholes for the wealthy. And both generate substantial tax savings.

First, eliminate the subsidy for the most expensive homes and vacation villas by limiting mortgage interest deductions to $12,000 per single return or $20,000 per joint return, adjusted for inflation. These ceilings are higher than the deductions now taken by nearly all homeowners—in fact, they would affect less than one-half of 1 percent of all taxpayers. They would yield the federal government an additional $1.25 billion this year, according to the Joint Taxation Committee. According to a Congressional Budget Office study, it "would retain the basic incentive for homeownership, but would not subsidize the luxury component of the most expensive homes and vacation homes."

Second, phase out the deduction entirely for the rich. If the 3.9 million taxpayers with incomes over $100,000 (3.1 percent of all taxpayers), adjusted for inflation, were no longer eligible for homeowner tax breaks, the federal government would net an additional $11.6 billion a year. If the cut-off started at $200,000 (1 million taxpayers, representing 0.8 percent of all returns), new federal revenues would total $3.7 billion.

Despite dire warnings from the real estate lobby, neither proposal—singly or in combination—will have a significant impact on the homebuilding industry. The affluent will continue to buy large homes, and second homes, but the prices will reflect their real market value, rather than the artificial price that includes the government subsidy.

And that way, we could stop subsidizing the rich to live in castles, and help more Americans stay out of shelters. □

The Worst City Government

In St. Paul, Minnesota, government usually runs as clean as the water; the occasional scandal appearing in the local press usually has a dateline from Chicago. So imagine local eyebrows this winter, when a year-long Minneapolis *Star Tribune* investigation disclosed that veteran fire chief Steve Conroy and his staff had declined to investigate dozens of suspected arson cases while Conroy's brother Pat, a fire rehab specialist, harvested more than $1 million dollars repairing (and sometimes not repairing) the damage.

Over the past 25 years, calculated the *Star Tribune*, 15 Conroy friends and business associates suffered an improbable 51 fires at their homes and businesses, collecting millions in losses from insurance. And firefighters frequently overlooked the obvious causes of these blazes—gasoline-soaked rags, broke or felonious owners, and other arson-for-profit indicators. "Grossly inadequate," said one outside fire investigator of the city's follow-up habits, which included asking no questions when certain local businessmen suffered three, four, and even five fires in a row.

One possible explanation is that many of the firefighters attending these dubious blazes also happened to be moonlighting for St. Paul's leading insurance adjustment firm—a firm originally financed by Chief Conroy and now owned by a friend. (Two former executives in the firm have been convicted of federal arson conspiracy.) Fire victims used the helpful adjuster to estimate—or, as several judges subsequently ruled, to inflate—the losses in fires at their clubs, homes, and apartment complexes. As the insurance companies paid up, contractor Pat Conroy was often called to handle the remodeling.

Not that Fire Chief Conroy was handing out insurance bonanzas only to his friends and associates. His own properties burned three times in 20 years; his brother's properties racked up eight conflagrations—a record that suggests some people just shouldn't play with fire.

—*Katherine Boo*

The *Monthly* depends on its readers to keep track of the breakdown of big city government. Please send your nominations to:

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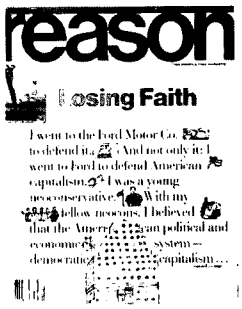

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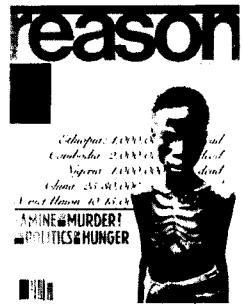

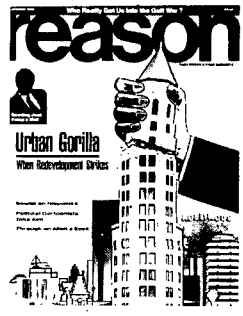

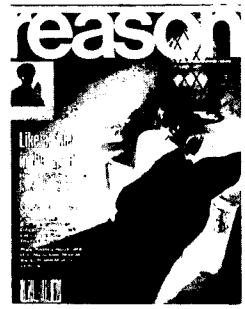

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So Many Officers, So Little to Do

A lieutenant commander should be in charge of a small ship or the weapons on a big one. But in today's swollen officer corps, he's just as likely to have jobs like running the Pentagon athletic club.

by James Bennet

"Dump the B-2!" the analysts urge. "Kill the ATF! Trash the LHX—and the M1-A2, SSN-21, F-14, C-17, V-22, D-5. . . ." But none of these armchair quarterbacks, frantically signaling as they go after our nation's defenses, has been saying: "Cut the officer corps." Sure, cutting back on officers sounds wimpy. One B-2 costs half a billion dollars. The D-5 missile program alone will eat up $35.5 billion over the next few years. But how would you like to save $20 billion *a year* in personnel costs, slash weapons prices by cutting down on procurement waste, and increase the combat readiness of the nation's troops? All this and more can be ours . . . if we cut the officer corps. In half.

The ranks of officers are wildly disproportionate to the peacetime force. At the end of World War II, the Army had 14 generals for each of its active divisions; today, it has 22. At the end of World War II, the Navy had one admiral for every 130 ships; today that ratio is 1 to 2.2. But that the services have too many generals and admirals is only a symptom of the more basic problem: Too many officers are pressing up from below. There are enough officers of the rank of lieutenant colonel and above to lead the force fielded during the second World War.

In 1945, the Department of Defense had 14,989 officers of the rank of colonel (in the Army, Air Force, and Marines) and captain (in the Navy). Today it has 14,301. In 1945, there were 36,967 lieutenant colonels and commanders. Today, there are 32,575. Unfortunately, there's not that much left to command: Total force strength has plummeted from 12.1 million in 1945 to about 2.1 million today.

The principle justification for stockpiling officers during peacetime seems sound: Should war come, as long as surplus officers are waiting to train and lead new inductees, the ranks can be filled in quickly, like slack balloons inflating. This reasoning produced the 1947 all-service Officer Personnel Act, which created the "up or out" promotion system and boosted the number of officers to provide for an ample, young corps. That law is behind most of today's impressive surplus. In the highly efficient Nazi Army of 1939, the ratio of officers to enlisted men was 1:34—and the army still wasn't at full strength. Though high, that ratio permitted a build-up over the next few months that enabled the Nazis to overrun France. In fact, German officers shrank in number relative to the size of the force over the course of the war, since they died at a higher rate than their men. In the United States in 1939, Roosevelt was still proclaiming neutrality and had not yet begun to build up the armed forces. The ratio of American officers to enlisted men in the services overall was 1 to 11.7; at the peak of the war effort, in 1945, it was 1 to 11.6. Today, there is one American officer for fewer than six enlisted men. What, one has to wonder, do all those officers do all day?

The short answer is that all of them do too little of everything. The Pentagon rotates its officers swiftly

James Bennet is an editor of The Washington Monthly.
Ned Martel contributed research assistance to this article.

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through a series of assignments in hopes of keeping them flexible and ready to lead newly mobilized troops into battle. But the number of officers has outraced the Pentagon's ability to place them productively; the effect is to decrease, not increase, readiness—and to breed cynicism and waste money at the same time.

Hollow corps

In 1986 Steven Canby, a defense consultant, was asked by the assistant secretary of defense for acquisition to study weapons development and procurement. He concluded that acquisition's perpetual problems of waste and cost overruns had their roots in the structure of the officer corps. While serving as program managers, officers barely had time to learn the system's ins and outs before they moved on to a new assignment. This constant reshuffling, combined with the surplus of officers, was undercutting even more important aspects of the military than acquisition. After all, officers are supposed to have the training and experience to lead troops into combat. But in the Army, 16 colonels and 13 lieutenant colonels competed, respectively, for each command position.

The result was what Canby called an "unsolvable dilemma": "If officers are rotated too fast, little experience is gained in field formations [and] military expertise suffers . . . . If command is held to the Army's recently discontinued goal of 30 months for the purpose of building cohesive units, most officers are excluded from command and their *raison d'etre*: experience for wartime command and staff responsibilities." That is, keeping so many officers undermines the goal of keeping so many officers: readiness. Either some officers must get no command time, or all officers must get too little time to learn the ropes and to gain the loyalty of their troops.

Surplus officers are forced into holding patterns. While awaiting the day that they must go to war as undertrained leaders, officers serve as underskilled bureaucrats, sometimes in productive jobs and sometimes in meaningless ones. At the Pentagon, officers of all ranks—trained and paid to lead troops in combat—work in public relations, lobbying, and speechwriting, and fill the ranks of "special assistants." Colonels flip charts for generals during congressional hearings; one- and two-star generals run tape recorders for high-ranking Pentagon officials during interviews.

A Navy lieutenant at sea might manage 100 men in his ship's engineering or maintenance division. In the Pentagon, one manages the dining room of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. A lieutenant commander, who during war might command a small ship or oversee the weapons of a destroyer, in peacetime runs the Pentagon Officers Athletic Club. A brigadier general directs the US Army Center of Military History—an important post, but not one you'd expect to see filled by a man trained to lead several thousand troops into battle. In the Air Force, the basic unit is the squadron, commanded by a lieutenant colonel. But with only 244 squadrons to command, the Air Force boasts 12,425 lieutenant colonels (maybe each of the 333 generals should control a squadron). That's why one of them runs the Air Force office of Bands and Music.

Keeping so many officers undermines the goal of keeping so many officers: readiness. Either some officers must get no command time, or all officers must get too little time to learn the ropes and to gain the loyalty of their troops.

The inflation of lieutenant colonels and colonels has been particularly extreme: from an officer-to-enlisted-man ratio of 1 to 208 at the end of World War II to 1 to 38 today. This helps to explain the swollen middles of American command bureaucracies—which themselves sometimes exist only to give a two- or three- star general a place to hang his hat. Two years ago, Derek Vander Schaaf, the Pentagon's deputy inspector general, studied almost 60 American commands around the world. He found that, generally, "middle level base operations . . . duplicate higher and lower headquarters functions. They usually provide only advice and recommendations, adding little of value or substance." Sometimes the excess personnel spills over, not to form a new level of bureaucracy, but to duplicate an existing level: Alongside the 49 people stationed at NATO headquarters who reported to the secretary of defense, Vander Schaaf found 46 reporting to the Joint Chiefs of

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Staff; and inside the US, he found three different commands with primary responsibility for developing "in-depth" plans for the defense of Baltimore.

Some of these jobs need to be done, although most of them could probably be consolidated. Performing them, however, does not exactly keep officers honed for battle or contribute to military support systems. Someone has to run the Institute of Heraldry, which designs and makes flags and symbols for the government. But why is this person an Army colonel? Even the field commands themselves can be so overstuffed with officers that men assigned to them gain no hands-on leadership experience. In examining commands in Japan and Korea, Vander Schaaf found that excess staffing meant the admirals at each post didn't have much to do: "neither of the two naval 'commanders' will ever command much of anything, certainly no ships or airplanes."

> The system prods every officer, no matter how well-meaning, to regard each assignment cynically, as an opportunity to rack up points and quickly move along.

The combination of "up or out" and swift rotation encourages (and is reinforced by) the modern military's "ticket-punching," credentialing approach to gaining promotion. The system prods every officer, no matter how well-meaning, to regard each assignment cynically, as an opportunity to rack up points and quickly move along. In procurement posts, these incentives discourage an officer from blowing the whistle on wasteful contractors and bad products. After all, for him the program is a way station on the journey up through the ranks. If he rocks the boat—complaining about overpriced bolts or unnecessary avionics—he will inevitably cross some general with a yen for the weapon.

In battle, the effects have been more deadly. Commanders in Vietnam served only six-month tours of duty so that the services could "blood" as many of them as possible; casualties among the troops varied inversely with the officer's combat experience, dropping over time—until a new commander arrived and started the learning process over again. Swift rotation meant that in many cases bonds never formed between the officer and the men he commanded. "The troops began to perceive that their officers simply were not prepared to share the risk of ultimate sacrifice—and they came to despise them for it," wrote Richard Gabriel and Paul Savage in *Crisis in Command.* A smaller proportion of American officers were cut down by the enemy than in other wars. And more were attacked by their own men.

War dividends

Undermining the combat readiness of American officers costs the government an enormous amount of money. To hold onto large numbers of young officers, the services offer strong inducements to join up, to stay, and, eventually, to leave. In 1987, the General Accounting Office found that the fringe benefits, retirement, and health care benefits of military personnel paid almost 60% more than those accorded civil servants. The benefits granted officers range from free health care to the $5,800 the government spends annually to maintain base homes that Marine Corps and Air Force generals live in rent-free. On top of his base pay of $46,141, a lieutenant colonel, for example, might receive over $1,400 each year for "Basic Allowance for Subsistence;" $8,000 for "Basic Allowance for Quarters" if he has dependents ($7,000 if he doesn't); and another $4,000 for his "Variable Housing Allowance"—all tax-free. That's enough to raise his salary by almost 25 percent, and it doesn't include other tax-free benefits like flight pay and hard-to-quantify ones like home loan assistance, recreational facilities (theaters, golf courses, family camping areas), noncontributory social security wage credits, and professional education and training. Of course the nation's warriors deserve special treatment. But officers get these benefits whether they spend their days planting bombs underwater with the SEALS or pushing a pencil in a Pentagon press office.

These untaxed benefits let officers take home much more than do civil servants of a comparable grade, according to the Congressional Budget Office. In gross income, a colonel with 26 years of service makes about $70,510, while his counterparts, a senior GS-15 or a level 2 member of the Senior Executive Service, pull in $62,873 and $71,800, respectively. After taxes, those salaries work out to $55,185 for the colonel and $40,045 and $45,335 for the civil servants. Even a level 2 federal executive (like the un-

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: ALL ATTORNEYS/STAFF NEEDING INTIMATE APPAREL

FR: MIKE FELDMAN

RE: ADRIENNE'S NEW BUSINESS

DATE: JUNE 12, 1989

Reproduced below is an article about my wife Adrienne Arsht Feldman's new intimate apparel business. I know she'll appreciate the patronage of those of you with intimate apparel needs. For you men, Adrienne's right when she says that a change in nightgowns makes you think that you're with a different woman each night. I've often felt that way.

THE WASHINGTON POST 6/11/89

Fashion Notes

By Nina Hyde
Washington Post Fashion Editor

The Lawyer's Look in Lingerie

ADRIENNE FELDMAN

"A woman should have enough nightgowns to wear something different every night of the week," says attorney Adrienne Arsht Feldman. "It makes your husband think he is with a different woman each night," teases Feldman, wife of Mike Feldman, a Washington attorney who was special counsel to presidents Kennedy and Johnson. "Besides," says Adrienne Feldman, who is chairman of Totalbank Corp. of Florida and a member of the board of American Ballet Theatre, "you spend half of your life in sleep clothes—shouldn't you have as fine a wardrobe for that as for your waking hours?"

Feldman's interest in intimate apparel goes back to the days when her grandmother had a store for foundation garments in Wilmington, Del., where she was born. When she married she had a special closet for all her lingerie; her husband's first gifts to her were long and short nightgowns.

Now she is putting her intimacy with the intimate-apparel business to work. With her friend Josie Natori, designer and manufacturer of some of the prettiest lingerie around, she has purchased certain assets of Eve Stillman Inc., an old-time, prestigious company whose quality products have sold in Washington stores and elsewhere for more than 40 years. The Stillman company will operate separately from Natori, and Stillman herself will still have a hand in the business. According to Feldman, Stillman is just back from Paris, where she has been looking for new fabric and trims for the next collection.

Top, floral chiffon robe; left, chiffon print gown.

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dersecretary of defense) takes home only $55,582. And the CBO analysis did not take into account that many officers pay no state taxes. (Officers and enlisted men can declare any state in which they once served as their official residence; as a result, frequent rotation can come in handy: The GAO has reported that, although only 13 percent of general and flag officers were stationed in the 14 states that don't tax income in September of 1986, 52 percent claimed these states as their residence.)

These salary figures also don't reflect the generous retirement benefits that drive the "up or out" system. That system has the effect of encouraging officers who make it through their first 10 to 12 years of service to stick around for at least 20, at which point they become eligible for retirement pay that amounts to at least half of their base salary. After 20 years of service, a captain or colonel—about 43 years old—retiring after January 1, 1989 could expect $25,500 annually from Uncle Sam; if he were retiring after 30 years, he could expect $43,884. That works out to lump sum payments of $644,629 and $890,636, respectively, over his projected lifetime. No wonder the ranks are inflated. And those figures don't include the costs of free health care provided to retirees and their families. Sure, the US government would save money by cutting programs like the C-17 cargo jet, which would cost around $1.5 billion next year. But rethinking the service's preparations for mobilization would save much more. The bottom line is that, once retirement costs are added, taxpayers spend *$8 billion* a year to stockpile lieutenant colonels and colonels alone.

Armed and dangerous

If the best way to guard against the need to mobilize were to stockpile officers—letting them atrophy in public relations jobs or pursue skills that will mainly benefit them in retirement—then the present system would be worth its price. But it's not the best way. In fact, the reasoning that produced the 1947 Officer Personnel Act was flawed. The main restraints on mobilization don't include training new middle-ranking officers. They do include training good technicians, non-commissioned and junior officers, and assembling a force to command; they also include producing weapons for these troops to fight with. Today's weapons are so expensive and intricate that they dribble off assembly lines at rates of 10 and 20 copies per year. Arms manufacturers would have to build 128 ships for every admiral—50,816 ships in all—to return the Navy to the World War II ratio. It would take the United States years to gear up for a long war—and we certainly don't need all these officers to fight a short one.

Canby advocates shifting over to a new, three-year enlistment system for the Army, Navy, and Marines. A unit, including officers and NCOs, would train together for the whole three years, establishing the bonds that today's ceaseless rotation rules out. The unit would then be disbanded. During the next 12 months, it would be on "phantom" status; if war breaks out, the fully trained, cohesive band could be recalled in the same amount of time it takes to bring back active duty personnel who are on leave. The services would hold on to technicians and tactical leaders for eight years, at which point they would either become part of the small, standing, non-operational army or join the reserves. Very few would remain in the services beyond ten years. Servicemen who leave after ten years, says Canby, could manage weapons programs for the military; like the reserve officers who develop weapons for the Israeli forces, they would have the training to understand what works on the battlefield and the independence to say "no" to a general.

Canby's system would cut the standing officer corps in half. It would eventually save at least $20 billion a year in training and retirement costs, $10 billion each from officers and enlisted men. A major cut like this wouldn't give the US a Teutonic, 1:34 ratio of officers to enlisted men. But it would take the armed services back to the ratio they had when World War II began, while retaining the young, able officers they didn't have then. Of course, the services would have to institute a bonus system to ease out officers who have already put in 12 to 20 years with the expectation of reaching full retirement; that would still be cheaper than paying these men and women to hang around until they get there (and then paying them not to hang around when they do).

Beyond generating personnel savings, cutting back on officers would save billions more by eliminating busy-work assignments and dumb acquisitions programs. Most important, it would produce an officer corps with more tooth than tail. The flurry of initials and numbers that accompanies defense budget debates somehow always obscures manpower issues. And even when analysts manage to look past the Seawolf or the C-17 to consider the people who will run them, they tend to treat them as subject to the same mechanical formulas used with hardware. But while doubling our airplanes might double the number of troops and the amount of equipment we can get to Europe fast, doubling the number of officers doesn't double military leadership. Indeed, it may even halve it. In the future, it would be nice to have an officer corps that was a little less quantified, and a little more qualified. □

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GAP's In Your Defense

Making the government more accountable isn't just a job for the General Accounting Office, the inspectors general, and congressional committees. Private organizations like the Government Accountability Project are important too.

by Alexander Kippen

It was one of those "60 Minutes" shows that if you didn't see, you certainly heard about. And if you saw it, you haven't felt the same about chicken salad since. It was all there: Hidden camera shots of workers in gore-spattered smocks gutting strung-up carcasses streaming by on an overhead conveyor. Dank sheds so dark you could barely see the putrid pools of God-knows-what on the shop floor. The highlight was when one of the birds fell off its hook onto that floor and a worker picked it up and put it right back on the line! It was as if someone had made a movie of *The Jungle*.

Not that any of this was news to consumer watchdogs or public interest groups. For years they've pushed chicken processors to clean up. But going against corporations it helps to have more on your side than file folders and newsletters. That Sunday night, the chicken industry got a hot rinse of America's universal solvent—publicity.

The notion that the media's bright lights are crucial for reform is what the Government Accountability Project (GAP) is all about. Making the government more accountable isn't just a job for the General Accounting Office, the inspectors general, and congressional committees—private organizations like GAP are important too.

Alexander Kippen is a television reporter for Washington Independent News.

Chicken in a bucket

At the Simmons Industries Inc. plant in South West City, Missouri, Department of Agriculture (USDA) grader Hobart Bartley says he was told by USDA superiors to approve chickens infected with salmonella, riddled with cancer, oozing with pus, and smeared with feces. "The damn thing would be half rotten, but they'd want me to put a grade on it."

Bartley was disgusted with the USDA's Streamlined Inspection System (SIS) for chicken, a cost-cutting measure in place since 1983. SIS means fewer government inspectors have less time to check more chickens to see if they're fit for human consumption. Bartley complains that the speeded-up system, reported to shuttle up to 90 chicken carcasses by per minute, makes it impossible to check properly for diseases like salmonella.

One day Bartley happened to look into the eight-foot-high vat of water called the "chiller," where as many as 10,000 chicken carcasses are left to float, soaking up moisture to increase their selling weight. Dried blood, feces, and hair were floating in the

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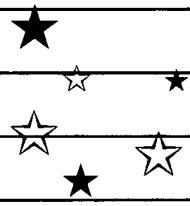

chiller along with the dead birds. Diane Sawyer called it a "fecal soup." It was, recalls Bartley, "a pool of disease and scum." After the vat had been drained one day, Bartley saw "about one foot of sludge . . . clumps of manure and [chicken] feed" left caked along the bottom. The chickens stored in that vat end up on our dinner tables.

About 50 feet from Simmons's main facility is the "protein plant," where chicken parts deemed unsuitable for humans—chicken heads, feet, and feathers—are boiled. They subsequently show up in your pet food listed as "meat by-products."

Bartley claims the protein plant stank so badly one day that he decided to take a look. It wasn't his job, but he was curious. What Bartley found sounds like a scene from a bad late-night horror movie: Heaps of chicken parts were "infested with maggots two feet deep. . .the pile would actually move like Jello."

Frustrated with the USDA, Bartley eventually took his complaints to GAP, and GAP took it from there, supplying the research and constant media pressure required to turn some hard-to-believe tales out of school into something like "fecal soup."

This private nonprofit group on E Street NW in Washington, D.C. is staffed by nine lawyers—most fresh from law school—paid between $22,000 and $40,000 a year to be a whistleblower's best friend. The group was born in 1975, its parent the unapologetically leftist Institute for Policy Studies. GAP hires no outside public relations or advertising people, relying instead on supporters and its own media successes to pass the word.

GAP's motto could well be "Don't sue, publicize." It represents whistleblowers in court only as a last resort. GAP's legal affairs director Tom Devine says, "Our job is to win a publicity campaign so that a lawsuit isn't necessary. When you're in a lawsuit, you're fighting a defensive battle . . . . We like to attack."

GAP reports that its current docket includes whistleblowers from corporate America who allege wrongful dismissal after having charged that their companies violated safety and health regulations. And GAP is representing Defense Department employees who claim that department regulations effectively block information from Congress. Two clients are Food and Drug Administration scientists alleging that the agency is failing to keep unsafe drugs out of the food chain. Another is the former director of Virginia's Department of Waste Management, who argued that the state must clean up a toxic landfill spanning two counties—and got fired for her efforts. And GAP currently has three CIA cases— one involving allegations that the agency supplied misleading information to Congress in connection with the Iran-contra scandal.

> GAP's motto could well be, "Don't sue, publicize."

When GAP chooses to take a case to the media, its credibility and persistence are key. "60 Minutes" executive producer Don Hewitt is typical in wanting to flush out the motives of any group that brings a whistleblower's gripe to the program's attention. "If I find out that a group is always on left-wing causes, or right-wing causes," says Hewitt, "I get suspicious. You've got to be very careful of ideology."

Although GAP's credibility is high, the organization was involved in at least one incident in which the truth was a little twisted. An article about poultry plants published under Tom Devine's byline in the magazine *Southern Exposure* claimed: "Since workers are not allowed to go to the bathroom, they sometimes have to use the floor. Chickens that fall in the

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What They're Saying Ab
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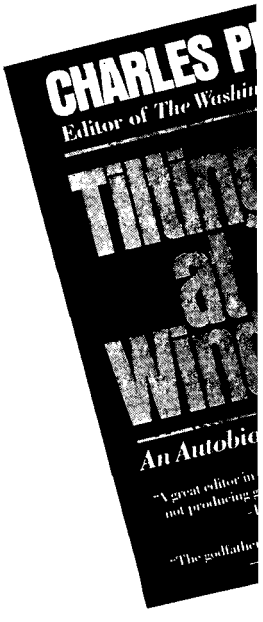

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, *Tilting at Windmills*. . .

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of a man who

—**Michael Beschloss**
The Chicago Tribune

story."
—***The Boston Globe***

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—**Bill Moyers**

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urine and excrement are routinely picked up and returned to the line." This passage suggests that chickens sometimes come into contact with human feces because employees are forced to defecate where they work. And this is false—when pressed, Devine admits that while the workers sometimes urinate near the assembly line, the excrement in question comes strictly from the chickens. Devine's original draft read: "Whistleblowers report that employees are not allowed to leave the floor to go to the bathroom, so frequently they have to use the floor—where chickens fall, routinely are picked out of the sewage and returned to the line." Devine claims that the added false assertions in the published article were not his doing, but that of the magazine's editors. Maybe so, but Devine's original sentence certainly implies contact with human feces. Although this episode is fairly minor since all accounts agree that there were serious health hazards at the plant, it still serves as a reminder of a failing that GAP, like any other publicity-driven organization, had best watch out for: the temptation to gild (or in this case, smear) the truth.

Has GAP succumbed to that temptation on other occasions? Ralph Nader says that GAP is "credible" and that Devine is a "solid guy." John Richard, a lawyer who has worked with Nader for 11 years calls GAP "among the best in the public interest community. . . .They don't puff things, they're not sloppy, and they're not ideologues." Tony Roisman, formerly of Trial Lawyers for Public Justice, who worked with GAP representing whistleblowers in the nuclear power industry, says, "They were meticulous in my experience . . . they made sure what came out was right."

Tom Devine first took Bartley's story about chickens to a CBS "60 Minutes" producer GAP had dealt with previously. Nevertheless, it took months of prodding a series of junior and senior producers before the network would commit to the story, and then three months for it to put the piece together. With a layout of the Simmons plant provided by GAP, CBS was able to position its hidden cameras to catch the most unsanitary targets before being discovered. As a result, 30 million people saw what Hobart Bartley saw.

Getting the story out that spectacularly protected Bartley from being fired. (Out of disillusionment, he later quit.) For a long time, Simmons officials ignored Bartley's repeated warnings of unsanitary conditions. "If I condemned 150 chicks as diseased, they'd pick out 147 and say they were fine." And his USDA bosses kowtowed to the plant's management, warning Bartley not to "bird-dog" the Simmons people. When Bartley refused to back off, the USDA transferred him in August 1985 to the night shift at another plant about six miles away. He went from "grader in charge" at Simmons to "other grader" at the Hudson Foods plant in Noel, Missouri. But in addition to publicizing Bartley's case, GAP forced the USDA to erase the negative comments from his employee file, and blocked the USDA's move to suspend him.

Congress began picking up on the problems with the Office of Special Counsel in 1982, when Counsel Alex Kosinski was forced to resign after allegations that he had taught federal managers how to get away with firing whistleblowers.

Tips for tattlers

Longtime students of bureaucracy can recognize in Bartley's plight the classic reaction of management to whistleblowers. Many such familiar details are rehearsed in GAP's *Survival Guide for Whistleblowers*: The book warns that "one of the most seri-

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ous risks of whistleblowing is family breakup. The entire family will suffer the resulting hardships." Additional tips include: try to remain anonymous, keep hard evidence to support allegations, check for potential supporters at work, and discreetly try to make changes within your workplace before complaining publicly. If publicity is the only recourse, GAP warns reformers, "choose a reporter carefully . . . and don't assume a reporter is your friend."

"Knowing where to bring information is important," says Devine. Bringing it to "the wrong person might just tip off the wrongdoers." And, he warns, "a little publicity is a bad thing." If a local reporter writes an isolated story that you saw the boss stealing food from homeless children, your boss will remember who exposed the story. Two weeks later, though, the public will have forgotten your name. And two months later, no one will remember why you were fired. So if you blow the whistle, blow loud.

GAP client Bertrand Berube was fired in 1983 from his position as a General Services Administration regional director in Washington, D.C. after threatening to expose what he believed to be financial fraud, fire hazards, and other problems that made "some of our GSA buildings unsafe for human occupancy." Berube appealed to the Office of Special Counsel (OSC), the federal institution created to investigate whistleblower disclosures. In a 1988 edition of *The Federal Times*, Berube described what followed as a nightmare. "OSC investigators grilled me under oath for five hours but dismissed my complaint after 45 minutes of telephone calls to GSA." In addition, Berube charges, "the special counsel said I had engaged in 'egregious insubordination.' " Shortly afterwards, Berube came to GAP. Five years of courtroom struggle later, the group had helped him get his job back.

Berube isn't the first whistleblower to complain about the OSC. A 1987 University of Maryland study reported that while more than 42 percent of the whistleblowers surveyed had used the OSC, they gave it an average rating of only 0.9 on a "helpfulness" scale of 0 to 5.

Congress began picking up on problems with the OSC in 1982, when Special Counsel Alex Kosinski was forced to resign after allegations that he had taught federal managers how to get away with firing whistleblowers. Complaints about the OSC finally resulted in the Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989, signed last spring by President Bush. Ralph Nader says that GAP's efforts were critical for the passage of the bill. The new law prohibits retaliation against federal employees and specifically prohibits the OSC, in most cases, from disclosing a whistleblower's evidence or identity to employers. (GAP is now pushing a similar bill to protect whistleblowers in the private sector.)

Whistles and skulls

GAP lawyer Tom Carpenter calls the Whistleblower Protection Act the Berter Law, after the GAP case that alerted Congress to the government's typical antiwhistleblower tactics. John Berter was a security officer at the Veterans Administration hospital in Cincinnati who had the misfortune to work for a vicious, racist boss, Daniel Wilson. Berter heard many reports about Wilson's involvement in violent incidents at the hospital and personally saw Wilson severely beat a panhandler on one occasion and assault a 68-year-old mentally disturbed patient on another. When Berter tried to notify the FBI and the mayor of Cincinnati, Wilson threatened him, gave him lower performance ratings, and finally fired him.

Carpenter took the case to the House Civil Service subcommittee, which eventually held hearings about the need for a new law to protect people like Berter. Besides helping to prepare Berter for his committee appearance, Carpenter got the story into Jack Anderson's column and onto NBC News.

The strategy GAP used to get the whistleblowing law passed was right out of their playbook—clean lobbying. GAP tipped off reporters around the country to stories of retaliation against whistleblowers. And it encouraged unions like the American Federation of Government Employees to get their members to contact their congressmen. GAP stirred up op-ed pieces. Later, it coached witnesses testifying before congressional committees. The bill passed both houses without a single dissenting vote. On the day President Bush signed the legislation, he praised whistleblowers as "public servants of the high-

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est order."

Yet until those words become permanently etched in the minds of management across the country, GAP will stay busy. GAP's executive director since 1978, Louis Clark, estimates between 200 and 500 new people approach the group for help each year. "If there was a watershed event it had to be the *Challenger* explosion in 1986," Clark, the 42-year-old civil rights veteran and former Methodist minister explains. He says calls to GAP from would-be whistleblowers tripled in the months following that disaster.

> GAP warns reformers, "choose a reporter carefully . . . and don't assume a reporter is your friend."

But GAP can accept only about five new cases each year. Clark says many are weeded out because they are either "off the wall" or "blowing the whistle on something that happened to them," like being passed over for a promotion in favor of the boss's son or being denied that Christmas bonus. On the other hand, Clark estimates that more than half of the callers have legitimate complaints but still can't be taken on because of the paucity of resources.

Clark's organization of 15 paid employees reports making $1,756,901 in the fiscal year that ended June 30. Of that, $242,137 reportedly came from individual donations; $797,200 flowed from 43 different grants from informal groups and foundations like the Rockefeller Family Fund, the Fund for Constitutional Government, and the Mary Reynolds Babcock Fund in Winston-Salem, North Carolina (yes, the tobacco family).

Last fiscal year, GAP took in $634,476 in awards, after successfully settling a series of long-running lawsuits, which included $134,000 from settling Bertrand Berube's suit for wrongful dismissal from the GSA. Another $383,000 came from settling suits by eight whistleblowers alleging safety infractions at the Comanche Peak nuclear plant in Texas, and the rest flowed from numerous suits involving denied Freedom of Information Act requests.

The group asks clients to pay only for expenses involving such things as travel and long distance telephone calls. It does not generally charge them for legal fees. Instead, GAP signs contracts with clients binding them to require an offending party to pay GAP a set amount before agreeing to any settlement. So GAP's money comes from the target of the suit. If a client loses, according to Clark, the group gets nothing.

So GAP goes for the biggest bang for its buck. The more national impact your allegations have, the better your chance of being taken aboard. If you find your boss at the State Department taking home some pens and memo pads, you're not likely to get as much attention from GAP as someone who discovers his boss is selling crack in the Pentagon parking lot.

The other key to being taken aboard is having a good chance of winning. GAP tries to avoid taking on losing cases, even when they have merit. "If the only thing a whistleblower is going to get from beating his head against a wall is a cracked skull," Tom Devine says flatly, "we advise him not to proceed."

A would-be whistleblower calling GAP gets connected with an "intake coordinator." If GAP considers your complaint "reasonable" and "significant" and believes its efforts can "make a difference," it launches an investigation. If that confirms the accuracy of your complaints, you're in.

Carpenter says GAP's strength is that it's not a single-issue group. If it were, he argues, it would have lost all credibility with Congress long ago.

During the eighties, one of the most frequent targets of GAP's publicity was the nuclear power industry. A 1985 article in *The American Spectator* condemned GAP as "the most successful antinuclear organization in the country," going on to say that "rarely have so few wreaked so much damage upon so many."

Carpenter represents a 35-year-old Mormon named Ed Bricker who's been criticizing the Hanford nuclear weapons plant in Richland, Washington since 1983. When Bricker, a nuclear process operator, arrived at Hanford's "Z" plant in 1983, it was making liquid plutonium into greenish "buttons," shaped like hockey pucks, weighing about four and a half pounds. They are the triggers for nuclear warheads

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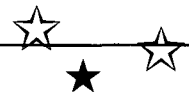

assembled at the Rocky Flats weapons facility in Colorado. Due to pressure from the Reagan administration in the early eighties, Hanford boosted plutonium production, which Bricker says resulted in careless production methods that could allow radioactive material to leak outside. Bricker once saw the plutonium-pumping system left on auto-pilot, with no one standing by in case of an emergency.

He complained constantly. Nothing was done, but his nagging didn't go unnoticed. Bricker says Rockwell International—which owned Hanford at the time—schemed to get him fired. By the summer of 1984, Bricker says co-workers told him they had been "asked to watch me and say what I do."

Then the harassment started. Bricker's wife began getting obscene phone calls. He found a tampon dyed with red ink in his lunch box. The brother of a plant manager hit Bricker in the face. And one day, while on a routine maintenance job in a radioactive area, Bricker's protective suit malfunctioned, cutting off his air supply. "I took it as a hint," he says, and he asked to be transferred to the "tank farms," where radioactive waste is stored.

But the tank farms had their own problems. In 1986 Bricker saw a worker mistakenly steamblast radioactive strontium and cesium into the air from a clogged waste pipe. After noticing other safety infractions, Bricker began complaining to the Department of Energy, which oversees all nuclear production. He also began leaking information to Michigan Democrat John Dingell's House Energy Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

That's when the harassment suddenly took a twist. Rockwell required Bricker to see a company psychologist on the grounds that his behavior was erratic. The gambit was easy to figure. Mental instability is grounds for canceling an employee's security clearance. Without that you can't work at Hanford.

Bricker received a clean bill of health, but the doctor determined that he was suffering from stress. Seeing an opening, Hanford promptly assigned Bricker to the job of driving an employee shuttle bus. "The clear message was that they would put me into this non-job until I quit." In addition to driving Car 44, Bricker was assigned to pick up cigarette butts in the yard used for breaks. He'd see smirks when he stood up after clearing an area. "Enjoying your job Bricker?" he often heard from sarcastic co-workers.

Nuclear bomb

As it turned out, many of Bricker's concerns were confirmed independently by Hanford's chief auditor, Casey Ruud, whose evidence of safety infractions led Hanford to shut down its problematic "Z" plant temporarily.

Nothing changed for Bricker until the summer of 1988, when he came to GAP. Tom Carpenter began collecting hard evidence supporting Bricker's charges and pushed for an independent investigation into Bricker's allegations of company harassment. By early 1989, Carpenter was presenting documentation to Dingell's subcommittee. The Michigan Democrat warned the Department of Energy (DOE) that he would be watching Bricker's case. Within weeks, Bricker was taken off taxi duty.

Oversight and Investigations subcommittee research analyst Jeff Hodges says, "If I got a call this afternoon from GAP on something, I'd definitely make time to see them . . . they may not always be correct, but they act as best they can given the information they have." GAP is so successful on Capitol Hill partly because it understands the roles of key committees. Hodges says GAP does "a very good job of relating their individual projects to our needs."

Of course, when it came to Bricker's charges Carpenter didn't neglect the press. He got in touch with a *New York Times* reporter, Matt Wald, who had been covering the nuclear industry for years and had worked with GAP before. Wald began tracking down Bricker's allegations of safety infractions at Hanford as well as reprisals from management, which now included another trip to the company psychologist in July and another clean bill of health.

On August 6, 1988, a Wald story on Bricker set off a local news firestorm in Washington state that put DOE on the defensive. As Carpenter quips, "There's nothing like a national story to get local media to look at what's going on." During a previously planned tour of Hanford later that month, Energy Secretary James Watkins was battered by local reporters with questions about Bricker. Watkins

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promised to look into the matter. In early November, DOE announced that a Department of Labor investigator would conduct an independent search into what Bricker calls his "nightmare." The agency also promised to review "its procedures for dealing with complaints that employees have suffered reprisals for making good-faith disclosures."

Meet your meat

USDA inspector Steve Cockerham has worked at the Monfort Inc. slaughterhouse in Grand Island, Nebraska, since 1978, one of five slaughterhouses in the United States now experimenting with a Streamlined Inspection System for beef. Cockerham reports that before the SIS program, he would check about 265 sides of beef each hour. Now in that span, he sees about 340 swing past.

Cockerham says he's seen hydraulic fluid and oil from an elevated gear box dripping all over the beef and workers. "One time," Cockerham reveals, "I seen a guy with hydraulic fluid on his arms climbin' all over a pile of carcasses to fix the spreader." (That's the machine that separates the hind legs of a carcass so it can be gutted.)

That metal spreader was a problem in itself. To sterilize it, workers are supposed to insert the spreader into a nearby steam canister between jobs. But Miller says that workers often ignore that last step because of the high line speed—and instead just move right to the next carcass. He says that's a sure way to transmit disease.

According to Cockerham, carcasses often fell onto the slaughterhouse floor. The "hide puller" is meant to help skin the carcass, but it sometimes pulls so hard that the whole side of beef comes crashing down into puddles of "blood, fat, grease, and dirt."

Cockerham insists that he and at least one other inspector would stop the line when they saw infractions and also complained to their bosses at USDA. But he says he's been told "to make the system work." He says in frustration that "we're viewed as rabble-rousers, troublemakers."

Last May, a local reporter told Cockerham about GAP. Tom Devine took the case, and after convincing himself it was legitimate, set up a Washington news conference. Devine, a former Georgetown University debate-team captain, coached Cockerham on how to deliver his story to reporters.

Devine also helped prepare a vivid example of Cockerham's allegations. Monfort beef, contaminated with grease, hair, and rusty metal chips from ill-serviced machinery, was prepared on a beautiful silver platter, complete with a white cloth doily. Devine says, "We always urge whistleblowers to find good examples of nauseating products that have been approved by the government." The good visuals clearly impressed an NBC News producer who had shown up. Within hours, GAP got a call from the *Today Show*, inviting Cockerham to tell his story to Bryant Gumbel the next morning.

"We drilled Cockerham that afternoon," Devine remembers. "We coached him on avoiding jargon, and made him more concise." He also explained Cockerham's story to the NBC producer writing questions for Gumbel. Devine goes in for this intense TV preparation because "it worried me in *The China Syndrome* when Jack Lemmon couldn't get his point across to Jane Fonda before they killed him."

Despite all the coaching, Cockerham was so nervous in the New York studio that he stammered at Gumbel's opening question. But if Cockerham looked bad, Food Safety Inspection Service Administrator Crawford, on-line from New York, looked worse. And Cockerham eventually relaxed, doing a good job of making his point that the Streamlined Inspection System is a bad idea.

Negative public reaction in the weeks following the *Today* spot led USDA to postpone indefinitely its plans for implementing the SIS in more than 50 of the nation's largest slaughterhouses, while the National Academy of Sciences announced that it would conduct a study. Cockerham believes his high profile has protected him from retaliation at Monfort. "I think they think I'm too big to mess with now," he chortles.

A point that became very clear to Louis Clark soon after arriving at GAP in 1978 was that the "public is motivated by stories of people getting screwed. If we could show examples of how whistleblowers are often crushed by dishonest bosses, we thought it would affect the public's attitude."

In the same way that Ronald Reagan often used to (and George Bush still does) go over the heads of Congress and appeal straight to Americans in their livingrooms, GAP counts on public opinion as the quickest path to justice. It's reassuring to know that Lee Atwater isn't the only one using the Great American Publicity Machine.

As GAP's Tom Devine often says, "In a free society, truth is the most powerful political weapon." In a country where communication is instant, while litigation is endless, public opinion has become the most effective courtroom. □

Making the System Work

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Post Paternalism or Black Blackmail?

Why *The Washington Post* endorsed Marion Barry three times.

by Scott Shuger

No question about it, the guy who just stepped out of his maroon van, the guy now walking down H Street in northeast Washington, sticks out. First of all, in a neighborhood that's mostly black, he's Wonder Bread white. Then at the west corner of 4th and H as he goes by the sign for Your Pizza Home restaurant—the long-neglected one with all the missing letters that actually says YOU A HOME—you notice his clothes: a worn, shiny suit and an unfashionably wide tie that both look older than he does. By the time he enters the low yellow and brown building on the other side of 4th, you realize he looks pretty unhappy too—as if instead of what he's about to do, he'd rather be having a root canal. The kicker is that the same guy shows up here every six months like clockwork. And he's been doing that for almost three years.

If you were a cop on surveillance watching all this, you might be on the radio already. The face doesn't quite fit the place. "Hey, wait a second," you can imagine the cop saying to his partner, "I've seen that guy's picture in the paper. Yeah, it's *his* paper. That's Donald Graham—he runs the *Post*. What's a guy like that doin' around here?"

Graham is here on one of his regular treks to WOL, one of the radio stations owned by black radio personality Cathy Hughes. To understand Graham's visits you have to go back to 1986 when, after months of planning, the *Post* unveiled its newly revamped Sunday magazine. That first issue contained a lengthy cover article on a black singer charged with murder in Washington and a column by Richard Cohen sympathizing with downtown jewelry store owners who, fearing robbery, refused to admit young black men into their stores.

The stories set off an immediate outcry from black readers. Hughes, along with D.C. Congressional Delegate Walter Fauntroy, launched a strikingly effective boycott: Each Sunday, the "Take It Back" protesters collected copies of the magazine—nearly 300,000 before it was all over—and tossed them on the front steps of the *Post*'s building. To get Hughes to call off the campaign, *Post* Executive Editor Ben Bradlee finally agreed to publish an apology in the newspaper, and Graham consented to appear on Hughes's talk show every six months through 1996 to discuss the newspaper's local coverage.

The *Post*'s woes are similar to those experienced by newspapers across the country trying to cover cities populated largely by minorities who can point to a long history of media neglect. In New York, Boston, Baltimore, Washington, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, and elsewhere, newspapers are constantly fending off the criticism that neither staffing nor coverage—especially on the front page—adequately reflects the communities that read them. This criticism has increased pressure on publishers, editors, and reporters to pay more attention to local coverage.

There will be just that sort of pressure on the *Boston Globe*, for instance, in the wake of the Charles Stuart murder-suicide case. The paper's uncritical reporting of Stuart's false story about a black assailant demonstrated that racism and ignorance can still warp news coverage and showed why black readers' suspicions—even of apparently liberal newspapers like the *Post* and the *Globe*—are sometimes justified.

Scott Shuger is an editor of The Washington Monthly. *Research assistance provided by Michael Carolan and Ned Martel.*

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On the other hand, newspapers can go too far in yielding to community pressures. *The Miami Herald* has recently gone through great turmoil in trying to serve the fast-growing, prosperous, and politically influential Cuban-American population in its circulation area. Consider what happened during last summer's heated campaign to fill the House seat of Florida's late Rep. Claude Pepper. The election pitted Jewish businessman Gerald Richman, a Democrat, against Republican State Sen. Illeana Ros-Lehtinen, who was vying to become the first Cuban-born member of Congress. Two days before the *Herald*'s endorsement editorial was scheduled to run, publisher Richard Capen announced to his staff that he would not permit an endorsement of Richman. Capen's stance set off a 30-minute, heated argument in the editorial meeting, where a majority of those present backed Richman. But in the end, the publisher prevailed, as publishers usually do. Capen said he made his decision out of concern that failure to endorse Ros-Lehtinen would result in financial losses for the newspaper.

Reporters and editors at the *Los Angeles Times* were embarrassed last summer when their much smaller (and now-defunct) rival, the *Herald Examiner*, broke the news of black mayor Tom Bradley's sub-rosa $18,000-a-year consulting deal with a bank doing city business. Seven months before that, the *Times* had discovered a different $18,000 deal Bradley had with another bank handling city deposits, but its managing editor killed the story. Although the editor defended his action by claiming that the story needed more reporting, one white Los Angeles politician told *The New York Times* that "there is a feeling that when you take on Bradley, the entire black population is going to be offended. They are very nervous about what happens if this guy is toppled and that causes the lid to be blown off."

These newspapers, admittedly, are in a tough bind. If they aggressively cover minority politicians, they likely will find themselves charged with racism. But if they try to soften their coverage, then they open themselves to charges of pandering. Although the right balance is obviously difficult to achieve, there's a lot to be learned from the story of how the *Post* is failing to attain it.

Do the *Post* thing

Packaging a cover story on a black suspected of murder with an essay that legitimated making racial distinctions in the first, heavily promoted issue of the *Post* magazine may have demonstrated insensitivity to black readers. Although it's true that blacks commit a disproportionate number of violent crimes, upright blacks become understandably frustrated with feeling that they constantly have to compete with negative images. Despite that just complaint, however, the angry boycott was an overreaction. After all, the magazine articles themselves were not defamatory or racist. The story about the singer was accurate in every detail—right down to its revelation that in an attempt to cash in on his predicament, he sang about killing people. And although there were ample grounds for reasonable disagreement with Cohen's essay, it was hardly a one-sided endorsement of anti-black bias. "All policies based on generalities have their injustices," he wrote, going on to say of storekeepers, "ask yourself what their policies would be if young white males were responsible for most urban crime."

The protesters went beyond reasonable disagreement. Hughes said that the magazine's cover story and the piece by Cohen were "an indictment of all black males in the metropolitan area between the ages of 18 and 25." That kind of exaggeration characterizes many of Hughes's criticisms of the *Post*. She has asserted that in many years of living in Washington, the only time she has seen a black face displayed prominently in the *Post* was "when there was a crime or a scandal involved."

Hughes's notions of what constitutes good coverage are also skewed. She said that when she'd heard that the inaugural *Post* magazine would feature a black subject, "we assumed someone like Bill Cosby, . . . Oprah Winfrey. I never dreamed they would put a black thug on the cover." Hughes's attitude about news isn't all that different from Spiro Agnew's in his "nattering nabobs" heyday: She wants it all positive. "When I give the *Post* a dollar and a quarter on Sunday, I want to feel good," Hughes says.

The *Post*'s relationship with Hughes has led to some unacceptable gaps in its news coverage. One example occurred last August when Hughes was seated prominently on stage at a rally of followers of Nation of Islam leader and black separatist Lewis Farrakhan. During the evening, speakers came forward to attack black politicians who've attracted white support. Jesse Jackson got the lion's share of the abuse; he was dismissed as "a weak-kneed, cocktail-sipping Uncle Tom." But, in its coverage of the event the next day, the *Post* didn't mention the attacks on Jackson. Never in a million years would the *Post* have made that omission if a *white* person had characterized Jackson that way. And the existence of black antipathy towards Jackson is certainly newsworthy. The result was that the *Post* fell down on its duty to *all* its readers because of a misplaced sense of its duty to *some* of them.

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It's significant that Graham's contact with Hughes is so structured and unnatural: 3 hours every 6 months for 10 years. Graham's forays to WOL are almost like trade meetings or summit conferences with a foreign nation.

The offending material that provoked the "Take It Back" campaign, as well as the odd resolution of it, come from the same root: Donald Graham and his mother, Katharine Graham—The Washington Post Co.'s chairman of the board—don't really know many blacks well. Although he grew up in Washington, Donald Graham was shielded from the city's blacks by wealth, class, and geography. These are the same conditions that continue to isolate most *Post* editors and reporters from them.

Donald Graham knows he's got an elitism problem, and he's tried to fight it. After all, he did, upon graduating magna cum laude from Harvard, volunteer for Army service in Vietnam and upon returning, did a year's stint as a D.C. cop. But for all his efforts, he still can't seem to lose his noblesse oblige. That's why although the Grahams have, through the powerful instrument of their paper, achieved a very commendable record on such social justice issues as school integration and equal access to public facilities, they can't seem to shake their well-intentioned but ultimately condescending tendency to think of blacks not as people who, like whites, run the full gamut of talent and character but rather as a *group* in need of *special treatment*. And that's why they've never really figured out how to do news reporting about blacks.

In short, despite appearances, Donald Graham's meetings with Cathy Hughes are based on real common ground—they share the idea that blacks require not just fair handling but special handling. That's not ground either should be encouraged to stand on. It makes for a newspaper that mistells stories, misses them altogether or—most unforgivable of all—*chooses not to tell them*. All this encourages readers in cruel misconceptions: Black readers get the idea that they should expect extra breaks and white readers get the equally mistaken notion that blacks usually need them. The newspaper has pursued this skewed course in its coverage of blacks for many decades.

Father knows best

The Graham tradition of sacrificing news coverage to advance social aims was impressed upon Ben Bradlee during his earliest days at the paper. In the summer of 1949, when Bradlee was a young reporter, a 400 person race riot broke out at a whites-only "public" swimming pool. Bradlee got the assignment; he interviewed participants and police and filed a comprehensive story. But the next day he discovered that very little of his reporting had gotten into the newspaper, and what there was had been buried in the second section. On top of that, the item was inaccurate: It described the riot as an "incident."

According to an account in *The Powers That Be*, David Halberstam's 1979 book on the national media, Bradlee was fuming about this when he suddenly was summoned to the publisher's office—the office of Donald Graham's father, Philip. Present were two top officials from the U.S. Department of the Interior, which controlled the city's parks and swimming pools, and one of Harry Truman's closest aides, Clark Clifford. When the men asked Bradlee to describe what he'd seen, he poured out all the grim details that his publisher had kept out of the newspaper. When Bradlee had finished, Graham told the government officials that the *Post* would run a full account of the riots the next day unless the Truman administration agreed to close all the city's swimming pools for the season and to reopen them, fully integrated, the following year. Clifford and the Interior officials agreed to the deal.

In a way, Donald Graham is like Sal, the white pizza parlor owner in Spike Lee's movie, *Do the Right Thing*. When it came to blacks, Sal was kindhearted, but also defensive and paternalistic. When the comparison to Sal was made to Graham, he didn't get it. He hadn't seen the movie.

The message was clear: At the *Post*, when liberal goals for blacks were at stake, paternalism would win out over honest reporting.

Nearly 17 years later, that same attitude led the *Post* to downplay Easter Monday riots at Glen Echo Amusement Park that sent black gangs marauding through Bethesda and northwest Washington. The crowd of 10,000 young people at the amusement park at the time rioting broke out was almost entirely black. Yet, in an editorial about "the disturbance" published shortly after the violence, the *Post* couldn't face just assigning blame to a bunch of thugs. According to the paper, also at fault were the rioters'

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parents, the amusement park's operators for "unskillful management of overflow crowds," the city for the lack of recreational facilities, the Congress for "hanging on to local powers of government that it is not equipped to exercise," and the federal government for failing to fund education and recreational programs in Washington that it finances elsewhere. That editorial was the epitome of white liberal guilt—assuring us that "blame aplenty lies about us everywhere." A few more column inches and *Plessy v. Ferguson* would have been cited.

"There is this sentiment that, independent of what the people of Washington, D.C. think, the Grahams know what's best," says University of the District of Columbia urban studies professor Howard Croft. "It's as though Katharine Graham is saying, 'You're my flock. You're my children. And I know what's best for you.' "

In a way, Donald Graham is like Sal, the white pizza parlor owner in Spike Lee's movie, *Do the Right Thing*. When it came to blacks, Sal was kindhearted, but also defensive and paternalistic. In the end, the kindhearted part didn't matter much; it was overwhelmed by his other qualities. His pizza parlor burned to the ground as completely as if he'd been a Nazi. Significantly, when the comparison to Sal was made to Graham during a recent appearance on WOL, he didn't get it. He hadn't seen the movie.

The *Post* matched its tradition of condescension towards blacks with an equally well-entrenched tendency to ignore day-to-day news about them. During the 1950s and much of the sixties, even while *Post* editorials made clarion calls for integration, blacks could not get wedding announcements or photos into the newspaper. Events in their community went uncovered. *Post* reporter Juan Williams says that older city blacks tell him, "I remember when my uncle was in a fire over here. They didn't cover it. But they covered the fire in a white neighborhood."

Strip joint endorsements

The *Post* today is either praised or blamed by city residents for doggedly dragging down Mayor Marion Barry. But there is no better example of its different standards for reporting on blacks than its failure to do just that, sooner. Barry, who first came into office in 1978 after his underdog candidacy against two more established rivals—the incumbent mayor and the city council chairman—was helped in no small part by the *Post*'s endorsement. And you can't fault the *Post* for having taken that stand then—Barry had played a crucial and courageous role in the civil rights movement and had served on the city's school board and city council; there was real justification for thinking that this blend of idealism and practical politics would move the city forward. But the *Post* kept supporting Barry and suppressing bad news about him long after his last shred of promise had disintegrated.

The *Post*'s double standard for Barry first became obvious in July 1979, when it covered his taxpayer-financed 18-day trip to Africa. As Joseph Nocera pointed out at the time in these pages (see "How Washington's Mayor Got a Free Ride," November 1979), although the *Post* had long been justifiably tough on freeloading white politicians—it had recently run a story about 14 congressmen attending a meeting in Lisbon under the accurate headline, "Passage to Portugal: A Diary of a Junket"—it covered Barry's trip not with skepticism but with reverence. The series was called not "African Junket" but "African Journal."

Milton Coleman, then a city hall reporter and now the Metro section editor and the highest-ranking black at the *Post*, didn't think that Barry's trip had to produce concrete benefits for the District or its residents. Coleman wrote: "From a black perspective, it's important that black leadership understand, be a part of, and identify with what's happening in Africa."

Nowhere, in its more than a dozen stories about the trip did the *Post* press the mayor about the propriety of his taking the trip 1) at public expense and 2) while the D.C. budget bill was pending in Congress. Nor were questions raised about 3) his wife's using the travel as an opportunity to drum up business for her employer or about 4) Barry and his wife keeping gifts they received on the trip, even though this is expressly illegal. All this forbearance was somehow available although the *Post* criticized Jimmy Carter for taking a trip down the Mississippi while important issues were unresolved in Washington. The *Post* simply was not asking Barry the same tough questions it had been famous for asking white politicians like Nixon or Carter.

Since then, there's been no shortage of Post Fiddles While Barry Fiddles While Washington Burns episodes. Consider:

➤In December 1979, the *Post* breaks the story that Mary Treadwell had conspired to defraud the federal government and low-income tenants at a housing project she ran. Treadwell is later convicted and sentenced to three years in prison. No mention is made in the *Post*'s front-page coverage that during some of the time she was committing this fraud, Treadwell was married to Barry, and that the mayor was Treadwell's partner in the housing project's umbrella organization. That information is run on page 16. There is no mention of the Mercedes Treadwell used to park in Barry's driveway, nor of the Volvo she gave

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him—all supposedly on her $23,000 annual salary. Later, when Treadwell is released from prison, she is immediately given a $28,000-a-year job with the city parole board. The *Post* runs that story on page D5.

➤In 1982 the *Post* learns that when one of Barry's supporters offered him several thousand dollars, the mayor responded by asking for the money in cash. The *Post* never publishes what it knew about the episode, even though Barry's desire to avoid a paper trail should have aroused suspicion.

➤In March 1983, the *Post* assigns a reporter to investigate widespread rumors that Barry had used cocaine when he stopped by a 14th Street strip joint in 1981. When the *Post* concludes that the cocaine allegations are unfounded, it runs an editorial denouncing their "smear quality" without addressing the payoff implications of Barry's own explanation for his attendance at the club—that he wasn't there for drugs or even for erotic delight; he was there to pick up a political contribution—even though the owners of the club were under grand jury investigation at the time.

➤In October 1986, a *Post* city hall reporter learns that the supposedly full-time director of the D.C. Alcohol and Drug Services Administration was spending two days a week working at another job in Baltimore. Milton Coleman suppresses the story until after Barry's re-election, on the grounds that nothing illegal was involved. In protest, *Post* Metro reporters produce a list of nearly a dozen stories critical of the Barry administration that had been diluted, delayed, or killed.

The difficulties the *Post* has facing up to Barry's scandals are not the worst consequences of its confused racial idealism. Far worse than scandal is poor service. Despite sumptuous budgets, it's been years since the District's government worked. The schools are teeming with administrators who don't teach supervising teachers who can't teach. In a city with 10,000 homeless, the municipal housing authority can't seem to fill the 2,400 vacant apartments it owns. Those lucky enough to decipher the code on getting public housing sometimes have to wait years to get heat or running water. A drug dealer suspected of murder is mistakenly released from police custody; before he is recaptured, he's wanted for killing four more people. A man with prior convictions on heroin and assault charges as well as 72 previous driving suspensions is issued a D.C. driver's license anyway. Then driving drunk, he cripples a woman for life. To be sure, the *Post* has covered some of these stories—it's hard to ignore a drunk running over a woman downtown on a weekday afternoon—but the paper has rarely explored the larger questions of government failure that such stories raise. It was clearly the *Post*'s responsibility to do a story like Jason DeParle's "The Worst City Government in America," which ran in this magazine. (Although the *Monthly* is proud of such articles, the point of citing them here is not self-promotion, but rather to show what the *Post* could have been doing. The *Post*'s failure to run these stories is all the more glaring because frequently it had unearthed most of the pieces of news that would support them. Yet it never put them together.) Despite the *Post*'s immense resources, stories showing real understanding about the breakdown of D.C.'s government have usually run somewhere else.

Editorial wheeze

The most graphic example of this failing comes in connection with the *Post*'s Juan Williams. Although widely recognized as one of the better reporters at the Metro section, Williams was not encouraged to get deeper into local stories. It was only in the pages of *The Washington Monthly* (see "A Dream Deferred: A Black Mayor Betrays the Faith," July-August 1986), and later in *The New Republic* and *Regardie's*, that Williams was able to confront the poor performance of Barry's administration. Since maintaining the appearance of fairness is an important goal for a newspaper, putting Williams, who is black, on the case would have been ideal. So why didn't the *Post* ask Williams to do that story?

The paper's demurrals on local coverage—which are in such stark contrast to the aggressive reporting and thoughtful analysis coming out of its national desk—seem driven by its wrongheaded racial attitudes. The thinking seems to be this: Since most of the city's employees are black, so are most of its incompetent employees. And criticizing blacks in print just doesn't fit well with noblesse oblige. But the *Post*'s silence has a cruel result—most of the incompetents' *victims* are black too.

It's true that after revelations in late 1988 about Barry's repeated late-hours visits to the motel room of a cocaine dealer, the *Post* finally admitted that Barry is "an embarrassing, ineffective mayor at a moment when residents have a right to expect the leader of their government to focus squarely on drugs, murder, municipal finances, housing, and other local emergencies." But the paper was awfully late answering the wake-up call. In a real sense, it bears responsibility for those continued emergencies: After all, the *Post* has endorsed Barry in three elections.

"When I was working on the editorial page staff," says Juan Williams, "there was a tendency to hold Barry to a lower standard than other politicians." In 1982, the *Post*'s readers were told on the editorial page that "on the whole, things are much better in the city and in city government than they were before

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Marion Barry took over," and that "Mayor Barry's achievements begin with his appointments to office. They are good."

Four years later, Barry's woeful shortcomings as an administrator and his association with people connected with drugs were well known. As was the pervasiveness of corruption in the top levels of his administration: During Barry's first two terms, more than a dozen senior city officials were forced to quit under suspicion of wrongdoing. Among them were two of the appointees lauded by name in the *Post*'s 1982 editorial, by now exposed as thieves. One was already in jail, the other was on his way.

Additionally, a drug-related investigation into Barry stalled only when his mistress and purported cocaine dealer, Karen Johnson, went to jail rather than cooperate with prosecutors. That news was disclosed not by the *Post* but by Mark Feldstein, investigative reporter for the local CBS-TV affiliate. Maybe the Grahams don't watch TV: The *Post* still endorsed Barry for mayor, this time citing "time-in-grade" as one reason for preferring him, and for another, that "neither the city nor its government has gone to hell in a handbasket over the Barry years."

New improved *Post* puffs

The *Post*'s reaction to black hostility typically hasn't been more honest reporting. Instead, it's usually been P.R. like Donald Graham's Mission To WOL. Or the "puff" pieces in the Sunday magazine or the Style section on blacks that are there not because the *Post* management really finds them significant or interesting but because by publishing them the paper hopes to bleed off black pressure. Cathy Hughes has owned WOL since 1980, but the *Post* didn't really cover her much until "Take it Back"—and then only in the most deferential way. The technique often works as appeasement. Cathy Hughes was thrilled with the post-boycott Sunday magazine. "It looks like *Ebony* magazine," she enthused. "Almost every story is about blacks."

The *Post* has run many other damage-control pieces as *news*. There was the series "The New Black Woman" that positively sprawled—it totalled more than 240 column-inches—over the paper for three days straight in December 1986. All three installments opened on the front page. The first started "above the fold," forcing down that day's story on the then-breaking Iran-contra scandal. One of these articles opened this way: "As vice-president of one of the country's largest black advertising agencies, Caroline R. Jones, 43, of New York, a stylish and sophisticated divorcée, circles the globe on business and meets men of every nationality." Despite such lavish use of "hard news" space for a "soft" feature, there was no lack of real news about blacks at the time, if only the *Post* knew where to look; this was the period when then-Lt. Gen. Colin Powell was being considered for promotion to second-in-command of the National Security Council. But the *Post* didn't get around to reporting on him for another three months, and that first Powell story ran on page A9.

In spite of repeated complaints about such myopia, the trend continues. Witness the page one story last December under the headline, "Drug Scourge Is Conspiracy by Whites, Some Blacks Say." Both the hysteria and the groundlessness of the 60 column-inch story is established right in the lead: "A significant number of blacks believe that the white establishment has intentionally allowed narcotics to devastate their communities, even encouraged drug abuse as a form of genocide." Not one fact about the conspiracy—not even the name of a single conspirator—is revealed in the story. This is news? The editor of Washington's *City Paper*, Jack Shafer, put his finger on what's wrong with such stories by suggesting a telling thought experiment. "Imagine," Shafer wrote in his press column, "if the *Post* ran a news story about white proles who believe that Jews control the media and high finance and that nobody gets elected without their approval. You could even dress it up by quoting White Aryan Resistance leader Tom Metzger in the affirmative and my brother Jerry in the negative."

The problem the *Post* is stumbling over when it publishes these bizarre stories is no small one; it's the problem of affirmative action. Because anti-black bigotry is so monstrous, good people will find it very tempting to replace it with reverse discrimination. But the right thing to do is to be tirelessly fair to those who've been historically oppressed, right up to the point of reverse discrimination—without ever reaching that point. It's never right to confer benefits on people that they don't deserve, no matter what their race, no matter how much we'd like to. Justice requires destroying the traditional prejudices while abstaining from creating new ones. This is what you've got to keep in mind when you wonder: Should a newspaper be color blind? Or should it publish stories about blacks it wouldn't publish about whites? The answer is: neither. A newspaper should be attentive to all the differences among races, ethnic groups, and social classes and it should use what it learns in doing so to make its writing and reporting truthful. But it should never let what it knows about race or believes about race or hopes about race influence it to write for any reason other than to communicate the truth. Playing by these rules is not easy, but doing anything else is either lobbying or lying. It's

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not newspapering.

In short, to make the *Post* a better newspaper, Donald Graham needs to do the same thing Cathy Hughes needs to do to be a better community leader: Stop seeing the world as composed of groups deserving special treatment and start seeing it the way it is.

Shying away from this difficult task and instead spending so much time and page space on public relations piffle keeps the *Post* bonded to very unrepresentative blacks whose concerns are not those of most of Washington's citizens. Cathy Hughes is worried about her ratings. Walter Fauntroy is worried about . . . well, when he came to the *Post* a few years ago for a meeting set up to cover city problems, his uppermost concern was the newspaper's refusal to call him "Congressman" in print. (The paper uses Fauntroy's actual title: "D.C. congressional delegate.") If you're a white journalist—and the overwhelming majority of *Post* staffers are—and don't know many blacks well to begin with, and you spend too much time with blacks like *that*, you're going to get some very weird ideas about their concerns.

Instead of producing agitprop like the cocaine genocide fantasy, *Post* reporters and editors should be aggressively covering the city's institutions, elected officials, and neighborhoods. Such a grassroots effort would help the paper's staff learn that a lot of blacks in the city, unlike Hughes and Fauntroy, are not asking for soft coverage. Just real coverage.

Many voices

Donald Graham was challenged recently to produce real coverage in a letter he received from Sam Smith, a longtime community newspaperman and political essayist in the city.

"Imagine," Smith wrote, ". . . a *Post* that found Style in people who earned less than six figures, or in people we could emulate rather than scorn. . . . A *Post* that did not wait for the downfall of the mayor to report the other voices and other ideas in the city. A *Post* in which one could expect to find both the joy and danger that awaited when one left the house in the morning."

The *Post* could begin improving in this direction by substantially increasing the size of its Metro section. The Metro desk has by far the largest number of reporters but typically gets the least amount of daily space. News about the District vies for only a few pages with items from Virginia and Maryland. As a result the section usually only has space for nonanalytical articles about officialdom.

Since last summer, however, the *Post* has been showing some hopeful signs of change. More local stories have been creeping onto the front page, and the Metro section has been sprinkled occasionally with articles about interesting people and places in the community. A signal event was the paper's coverage of the Rev. George Stallings. Stallings is the priest who broke with the Vatican last summer, alleging racism, in order to set up his own brand of black Catholicism. The Stallings stories were extensive and by no means one-sided; along with attempts to identify the frustrations of black Catholics, there was the revelation of an incident in which Stallings allegedly had sex with an altar boy and the report that shortly before Stallings made his break, his church superior had asked him to undergo psychological counseling for a sexual disorder. These improvements in reporting may have already yielded a benefit for the *Post*. When Stallings attempted to launch an advertising boycott of the paper, his campaign fizzled.

Real news

But the most important sign that the *Post* may be making some progress through the minefield of reporting and race came last July, when the paper ran a story about Dooney Waters, a six-year-old black boy living with his crack-addicted mother. Even in a world too ready to make horrors like crack a statistic and a cliché, who wouldn't be wrenched by this narrative?

"While he was living in the crack house, Dooney was burned when a woman tossed boiling water at his mother's face in a drug dispute, and his right palm was singed when his 13-year-old half-brother handed him a soft drink can that had been used to heat crack cocaine on the stove.

"Teachers said that Dooney often begged to be taken to their homes, once asking if he could stay overnight in his classroom. 'I'll sleep on the floor,' Dooney told an instructor. . . . 'Please don't make me go home. I don't want to go back there.'

"Dooney was painfully shy or exhaustively outgoing, depending largely upon whether he was at home or in school—the one place where he could relax. In class, he played practical jokes on friends and passed out kisses and hugs to teachers. But his mood darkened when he boarded a bus for home."

Cathy Hughes hated that story. But really there's a great deal of love in it—love of the truth and love of the sad and innocent children of drugs. Those kids don't get much from Cathy Hughes or Walter Fauntroy or Marion Barry. But a story like that could be the beginning of the salvation of Dooney, other kids like him, and a generation of Dooneys—of whatever color—as yet unborn.

If a newspaper can do a story that great, it deserves to be prodded to do more like it. □

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That's Because They Play Dead Better

A study conducted by the Center for Media and Public Affairs discovered that the Bush family dog, Millie, has been mentioned in more television stories than three cabinet secretaries: Education's Lauro Cavazos, Agriculture's Clayton Yeutter, and Edward Derwinski of Veterans' Affairs.

How About Naming the City Dump Westmore-land?

Time magazine reports that Houston city councilman Jim Westmoreland suggested that instead of renaming the city's airport for the late Rep. Mickey Leland, it should be called "Nigger International." Westmoreland later explained that he had said "Negro International," but had been misunderstood.

Gee, Why Didn't Lincoln Savings and Loan Think of That?

Citizens and Southern National Bank of Atlanta, Georgia, has issued a *Gone With the Wind* MasterCard.

COMING SOON: GUCCI DIAPERS

Capo Punishment

In Providence, Rhode Island, it was revealed that a confessed murderer and mob informant was allowed to carry guns and drugs and to collect $98,000 in welfare payments while in state custody as a protected witness.

He's Requested Transfer to Providence

The police chief of Brockton, Massachusetts, was arrested for stealing cocaine seized in drug busts.

Those Who Can, Do

The dean of the business school at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, recently filed for bankruptcy in federal court.

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White House Confidential

The top speechwriter for Reagan and Bush takes you behind her lines.

by James Fallows

Peggy Noonan is a terrific speechwriter, as she showed most convincingly with George Bush's acceptance speech at the Republican Convention in 1988. This book* shows that she is also a skillful raconteur. *What I Saw at the Revolution* is a memoir that goes lightly over her pre-political experiences and then concentrates on the two-plus years she spent working at the White House for Reagan and her later experiences with Bush.

The book has the right mix of gossip, score-settling, and story-telling, and it is usually quite funny. (A warrior from the Afghan Mujahedeen resistance comes to the White House for meetings to raise support. Noonan takes him to the White House Mess for lunch. "The polite, attentive Filipino steward approaches and holds out his pad, his pencil poised in the air. The Mujahedeen warrior turns his turbaned head. 'I will have meat,' he says.") There are enough delicious moments in this book to earn it a place with Donald Regan's *For the Record* and Christopher Buckley's hilarious novel, *The White House Mess,* on the short list of Reagan-era memoirs that are well worth reading as well as enormous fun to read.

Noonan is wholeheartedly on the side of Reaganism and of Ronald Reagan, but she does not make Reagan out to be some kind of mental giant or perfect man. Near the end of his term, she says, "I knew he was one of the great men of our time...[but] when I thought of him in those days, it was as a gigantic heroic balloon floating in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, right up there between Superman and Big Bird."

**What I Saw at the Revolution.* Peggy Noonan. *Random House, $18.95.*

James Fallows, a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly, *is the Washington editor of* The Atlantic *and was chief speechwriter in the Carter White House for two years.*

Having come to Washington in her mid-30s, after growing up and working in New York, Noonan usually remains skeptical of the classic Washington vanities. After she's called in for a meeting with Reagan, she leaves thinking, "I would be able to say, 'Well, I was meeting with the President the other day, and he says —' for weeks." When she learns that Bud McFarlane has tried to kill himself, because of his humiliation in the Iran-Contra business, she says: "In Washington in the eighties a man would attempt suicide when he thought his career was over, and later he would say, 'I did it because I had failed my country, and failure and defeat are difficult for someone with my admittedly achieving nature to countenance.'...Not 'I did it because my anguish is so huge, so ineradicable that to remove it I had to try to remove myself.' and not, 'Because I'll never be president,' which is what he wanted, I think, because he'd been in that Oval Office.

"It never occurred to him that he didn't have to make a statement."

A Buster Keaton-like comic pathos is built into the speechwriter's condition, and Noonan evokes it very well. If a speech succeeds, the writer feels underappreciated. (Noonan recounts a wonderful anecdote about Dwight Eisenhower, who was sitting with his own speechwriters, having won every honor his nation could offer, when suddenly he turned resentful. "You probably think Doug MacArthur was the great silver-tongued orator of the army. Well, who do you think his speechwriter was? It was *me*!") If a speech fails, the writer takes the blame, although he's usually fought a losing battle against the policy nerds who've gummed and sucked at the draft until it turned to mush. When the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded, Noonan says, she dashed off a statement

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for Reagan to read. "It went almost as written. The staffing process had no time to make it bad." Her draft contained a quote from the wartime poem about aviators who "slipped the surly bonds of Earth" to "touch the face of God": "The worst edit...I received in all my time in the White House—was from a pudgy young NSC mover who told me to change the quote at the end from 'touch the face of God' to 'reach out and touch someone—touch the face of God.' He felt this was eloquent. He'd heard it in a commercial. I took it to Ben Elliot, [head of the speech writing office] and said, I'll kill, I'll kill, I'll kill him if this gets through. Ben, alarmed, assured me that he would explain if pressed that you don't really change a quotation from a poem in this manner."

The book as a whole has the strengths and weaknesses of a speech by Reagan or a commentary by Rather: It is vivid, engaging, moving, and often poetic, but it doesn't stay with anything that might turn out to be very complicated.

Considering the generally high regard for herself that comes through this book, it is nice that Noonan also makes gentle fun of the tics she introduced into Bush's convention speech: the bizarre subject-less sentences in which Bush recounted, "Moved to Texas, joined the Republican party, raised a family," and so on. Noonan says dryly of this style:

"Had the benefit of sounding natural and relaxed, the drawback of sometimes being hard to pull off. Imagined him raising his hand on the Capitol steps—'Do solemnly swear, will preserve and protect . . . .'"

Can such an entertaining book, which is so often insightful about people other than the author, have any defects? Unfortunately it can. There are three significant problems with this book, which actually seem to be traits of character that come through in the writing.

First, even by the standards of Reagan-era memoirists and of speechwriters as a class, Noonan seems remarkably full of herself. Life somehow has never taught her that, if you can't be genuinely modest, even the semblance of modesty is a plus. She gives phrase-by-phrase accounts of how she drafted her speeches, in a tone that would be appropriate for bar-by-bar recollections by Mozart. She says that, after she finished hammering out a draft, the speech writing process would typically (!) go like this: "I would get it back from Ben. He would not have changed it much, but he would have written little exclamation points along the margins, and sometimes on some sections he would write, 'Excellent!' And I would be shocked that Ben's critical faculties had failed him. Then I would read over the speech and realize for the first time that it was actually pretty brilliant, so delicate and yet so vital, so vital and yet so tender." My sympathies are entirely with Noonan as she fights against the policy nerds, but it's easy to imagine them grinding their teeth about her "delicate yet vital" prose.

Class act

Second, there is a peculiar class dynamic underway in the book. Noonan grew up in a working-class Irish neighborhood in Brooklyn, where most children of her generation (she is in her late 30s) were the first in their families to go to college. She understands exactly why the hereditary Democrats of her neighborhood, who viewed John Kennedy as their hero and savior in 1960, came to see Ronald Reagan the same way 20 years later. We all bear the marks of our upbringings, and even though Noonan has spent the last 15 years doing professional-class jobs in Cambridge, Manhattan, and Washington, she may feel that her soul is still in Brooklyn. But in this book she hauls out her working-class credentials so often and so showily that she seems to be using them to mau-mau the "nice young men in blue suits from Brooks" she fought against in the White House. They couldn't possibly understand the emotions of the real America (she would tell them), because unlike her, they weren't from Brooklyn and hadn't ever worked in a diner. There's something to this point, but not as much as Noonan makes of it here. When she's not talking about her humble roots, Noonan drops allusions to the world of academics and aesthetes—the Deconstructionists, Gerald Murphy—that seem a little far-fetched. I could be reading it wrong, but it looks as if she is using these signals to show that she has it both ways: she's a woman of the people, but she knows as much as the pointy-heads. To be clear about this point, there is nothing wrong with being a woman of the people or with knowing a lot about history or art. The problem is that both these parts of Noonan's identity in the book seem forced rather

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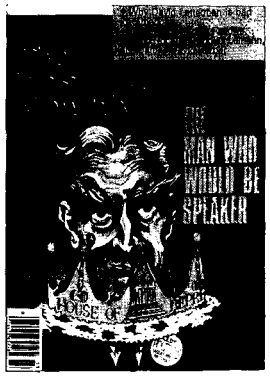

Three years before the downfall of House Speaker Jim Wright, *The Washington Monthly* warned its readers: "If Tip O'Neill seems like the sort of guy who would write out a taxpayer endorsed check to everyone who tried to sell him swampland in Florida, Jim Wright seems more like the guy selling the land."

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➥ Months *before* the stock market crash in 1987, we warned that the programmed trading and low-margin stock options could turn a bad day into Black Monday.

➥ Months *before* the Iran-Contra scandal broke in newspapers, we warned readers, "This National Security Council staff is the worst in history."

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than natural, as if they say more about the way Noonan wants to be seen than about what she really is.

Better said than read

Finally there is the question of "writing for the ear." Before she joined the Reagan staff, Noonan had spent several years as a writer for Dan Rather. Her speciality was scripts for his five-minute radio commentaries. She presents it as a kind of delicious irony that she could have spanned the gulf between Rather and Reagan. But by the time a reader finishes this book, the irony or mystery will have disappeared. In both jobs, Noonan was doing essentially the same thing—writing words that would be listened to, rather than read on a page. Probably without meaning to, she uses the same approach in much of this book, and in so doing she demonstrates that the way she writes matters more than what she says: The structural similarity between Rather's broadcasts and Reagan's speeches matters more than the supposed differences in their political points of view.

"Writing for the ear," as Noonan describes her specialty, and writing for the eye are different skills. Some people are good at both: William Safire, Pat Buchanan, Charles McCarry, and Hendrik Hertzberg, to choose a varied list, were all effective White House speechwriters, and all have been at least as effective writing books, articles, or columns designed to be read. But people who can write the one way often can't write the other, since the demands of the two styles are surprisingly different. Writing for the ear has to convey its meaning more concisely, with images, touching the emotions as well as the mind. In its ideal form, it is poetry. In return it's able to shuck some of the burden of logic and argumentation that writing for the page is supposed to bear. It's almost always disappointing to read the script of a broadcast that sounded powerful and moving when you heard it. The holes in the argument are so much more obvious; what sounded eloquent often looks trite.

Peggy Noonan has a true gift for ear writing, but this book suggests that she can't really go both ways. One indication is a stylistic peculiarity. The book is dotted with the kind of "transition" that works in a broadcast, with a pause at either end, or as the voice-over for a video shot that implies the transition by itself as the images change. In print, however, these transitions "And there was another thing:" "There was this about Washington:"—look like ways to avoid thinking out the real connection between ideas.

The more serious indication is that the book as a whole has the strengths and weaknesses of a speech by Reagan or a commentary by Rather: it is vivid, engaging, moving, and often poetic, but it doesn't stay with anything that might turn out to be very complicated. For instance, Noonan mentions out of the blue that she has run into liberals who've criticized the young Reagan appointees: If they're so devoted to the family, why aren't any of them married? If they're so high on patriotism, why didn't any of them go to Vietnam? If they're so eager to support religion, why aren't they ever in church? "If they're so interested in traditional values, how come half of them are faggots?" Noonan spends half a page presenting the scenes where people challenged her with these questions...*and that's it!* She never mentions any of the points again, and to all appearances never thinks about them.

Once over lightly

In a radio broadcast, this would be OK—the emotional chord would have been sounded, the narrator would not be expected to act as a debater and deal with every idea that is introduced. It's different in a book. Noonan quotes, with understandable pride, a radio commentary she did for Rather after John Hinckley was sent to a mental hospital for shooting Reagan and maiming Jim Brady—while poor people guilty of much less heinous crimes were left to rot in jail. The commentary was built around a refrain, a kind of chant: "Something is wrong here." It is easy to imagine how powerful it must have been over the air. On the page, the repeated refrain looks a little bit stupid—of course "something is wrong," we know that already; tell us exactly what the problem is and what we can do about it. So too with Noonan's brief mention of the fervent conservatives who don't practice what they preach. If you're going to write about the "revolutionaries" who served Reagan, you can't just skate past questions of this sort.

At a dozen other crucial points, Noonan gives a Dan Rather commentary about an idea, rather than writing about it. To give just one other example, she assures us that: "Someone once said the most important word in 'We the people' is 'We.' [This, by the way, is a for-the-ear-only sentence if ever there was one. Can't you just hear Reagan, or for that matter Rather, saying it?] Reagan knew this in his bones. He represented the idea that all of us together, the American people, 'hold these truths'—that all men are created equal, that democracy is better than dictatorship, that justice is a standard we must each seek to meet. He brought back the 'We.'"

Whoa there! The chapter ends, Noonan moves on, and she wastes no time defending an assertion that, to put it charitably, not all her readers will find instantly convincing. It would, however, have been perfect in a speech. □

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Games People Shouldn't Play

State lotteries take from the poor and give to the rich

by Peter Luke

In 1977, sagging sales and waning public interest in the Michigan State Lottery prompted the introduction of a new game called the Daily. Modeled after the illegal street numbers games that had flourished in the state's larger cities for decades, the Daily promised millions in instant revenue from a consumer base familiar with the rules and eager to bet.

That the players of the new game would likely be black, poor, and living in inner-city Detroit did not trouble state officials; in fact, it encouraged them. Most of the initial 300 computer terminals required to dispense the Daily tickets were installed in liquor stores in deteriorating neighborhoods. Twelve years later, the Daily is still most popular among urban bettors, accounting for 80 percent of all lottery sales in Detroit, where poverty, dropout, and welfare rates are the highest in Michigan. Daily sales are now near $500 million annually, about half of total lottery sales in Michigan. Citing the practice of grant recipients exchanging public assistance checks for lottery tickets, one Detroit minister, the Rev. James Holley said in 1988: "The state gives them money and then figures out a way to get it back. It's the craziest thing I've ever seen." Holley since has been awarded a $2 million public relations contract from the lottery bureau.

Gus Harrison, the lottery director when the Daily was introduced, said the policy implications of the new venture were clear but ignored. "You can get into a lot of rationalizations about this whole business," he said.

That whole business is now a $15 billion-a-year operation in 37 states that have discovered that lotteries provide treasury coffers a growing stream of income with which to balance the books. It is also a business that has enjoyed a remarkable lack of scrutiny over who plays the games, how they are marketed, and how the proceeds are spent. Charles T. Clotfelter and Philip J. Cook attempt to supply that scrutiny in this book.*

The two Duke economists document long-held suspicions that the poor and uneducated are state lotteries' best customers and describe how states have become architects of sophisticated, though dishonest, ad campaigns that target these groups.

These are the two aspects of state lotteries that should generate the most concern among policy makers. They deserved more attention from Clotfelter and Cook. The book lacks sufficient description of the culture of inner-city lottery play and the marketing strategies states employ. The authors, for example, found that 10 percent of lottery players account for 50 percent of sales, but they don't explore in great enough detail the demographics of that 10 percent. They explain the phenomenon of dream books and other guides players use in choosing numbers, but don't investigate which income or racial group is more likely to use those methods.

Those weaknesses, which include the lack of a forceful conclusion on the propriety of the state acting as sideshow huckster, lessen the potential of *Selling Hope* to change many minds about lotteries.

Peter Luke is a correspondent for Booth Newspapers in Lansing, Michigan

**Selling Hope: State Lotteries in America.* Charles T. Clotfelter and Philip J. Cook. *Harvard University Press, $29.50.*

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A number of studies on lottery play, though imperfect, have found that ticket sales are greatest in low income urban areas. Per capita sales in inner city Detroit, for example, are three times higher than sales in the suburbs. The difference is even greater when sales are measured as a percentage of household income—as much as 6 percent in some Detroit neighborhoods compared with less than 1 percent in the high-wage suburbs. Lottery sales have also been found to decline in areas where the level of education is higher. Per capita lottery sales in some Detroit neighborhoods approach $300. In Ann Arbor, it's about $50.

Ads without odds

Those numbers alone suggest that through its lotteries, state government is exploiting those of its citizens who can least afford to play. Not only that, but the games are a rotten deal for players. Clotfelter and Cook ran computer simulations gauging the probabilities of beating the house. In one pattern, daily $2 bets were placed on a numbers game by 1,000 hypothetical players over a five-year period. Only 2 percent made money. More than 50 percent lost half the amount wagered.

Surveys conducted by state lotteries show that few players have a clear idea of how dismal the odds are of winning. It is a finding few lottery officials feel needs correcting, however. In Michigan, legislative attempts to force the lottery to state the odds of winning in its advertising were bitterly fought by lottery officials who claimed it would diminish the effectiveness of their ads. When a law finally was passed, the odds were flashed in print so small as to be unreadable. The information was also inaccurate; the odds shown represented the overall chance of winning some money in a game, not the 7 million-to-one odds against taking the million dollar grand prize.

The authors write that if state lotteries were held to the same truth-in-advertising standards as private sweepstakes, they'd be shut down by the Federal Trade Commission.

Advertising is one of the most troublesome aspects of state lotteries. Lottery agencies spend millions annually pitching the public their products. Characters in the ads are often blue-collar workers in settings such as bowling alleys and factories. Perhaps sensitive to charges they are targeting their advertising, agencies feature relatively few blacks in the ads. Such targeting is accomplished in other ways, most efficiently through radio advertising. Over a two week period, Clotfelter and Cook surveyed lottery ads on New York radio stations and discovered that the ads mostly were made on black music and country stations. Few ads were placed on news or classical music stations with their middle and upper-income listeners.

Reverse Robin Hood

Lottery advocates often cite potential contributions to state programs. But even though public schools are the earmarked beneficiaries of lottery revenue in many states, the money has not been a windfall for students, because as lottery proceeds have increased, lawmakers and budget writers have shifted other tax dollars away from school aid into different programs.

While the benefits to education are suspect, more amazing is how lottery revenue from poor urban school districts is shifted to more prosperous schools. It's Robin Hood in reverse. For example, lottery purchases by Detroit residents contributed $104 million to Michigan's school aid fund in fiscal year 1988, while Detroit public schools received only $80 million back in lottery-generated school aid revenue. About $24 million from Detroit lottery sales was given to other, richer school districts. That's why proposals in Michigan for proportional distribution of lottery-generated school revenue have been resisted by small-city and rural lawmakers.

Despite these policy concerns, lotteries are here to stay. Some lawmakers who find state-run gambling distasteful also know curtailing or abolishing it would require unpopular increases in other taxes or cuts in favored programs.

Because Clotfelter and Cook also recognize the permanence of lotteries, they suggest variations that would make the game either more fair to the ticket buyers or less appealing to individuals who gamble beyond their means. One, a consumer lottery, would offer a payout rate much higher than the current 50 percent rates of most states. It would mean less money for states, but a better buy for bettors. But it would probably also induce more people to gamble, since the game would be more lucrative to winners. More appropriate would be lotteries with minimal ad budgets and games that discourage heavy betting. Most state lotteries, in their infancies, were operated along those lines before the thirst for revenue led to the creation of games like Michigan Daily.

When states spend millions each year in advertising trying to fleece welfare recipients and the working poor, they are saying these people's best hope for a better life is not a better public education for their children, job training, or a crime-fee neighborhood; but 1,000-to-1 odds at the corner liquor store. States are in business to protect their citizens from consumer fraud, not to encourage it. □

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English Lessons

For all her faults, Maggie Thatcher has done some good and revolutionary things for England.

by Michael Kinsley

The Washington Monthly has long championed the cause of honest book reviewing. In particular it has mocked the practice of friends reviewing books by friends without revealing the connection. But reviewing by enemies, especially ideological enemies, can be just as corrupt. Paul Johnson, who writes the press column in the British *Spectator,* made this point in a recent article. Yet the most fantastically dishonest book review I have ever read, I think, appeared recently under this same man's byline in *The Wall Street Journal.* The victim was *The Iron Lady,** a biography of Margaret Thatcher by Hugo Young, the political correspondent of *The Guardian*, Britain's leading liberal newspaper.

Johnson, a prominent British writer, is an extreme version of an American neoconservative. Extreme in the speed of his political conversion (he dashed the same distance across the political spectrum during a couple of years in the mid-1970s that the leading American neocons traversed in a couple of leisurely decades). Extreme also in his fanatical insistence that no decent person could hold views he himself held for most of his life. Johnson's review of *The Iron Lady* argued that the book is a typical example of left-wing snobbery toward Mrs. Thatcher by "those who consider themselves her social and intellectual equals." The danger of cultural snobbery among liberals is another favorite theme of *The Washington Monthly.* But Young's book is a poor illustration of the thesis since—as every other review has pointed out—the book (unlike the review) is scrupulously fair and, on balance, even reluctantly admiring.

Even in describing the Falklands adventure, of which he is generally critical, Young writes, "Through the weeks of turbulence and political fear, Mrs. Thatcher behaved like the best kind of soldier. She was calm and . . . clear-sighted." Young's most vicious thrust is reserved not for Thatcher but for her worst political enemy—who is not Labour leader Neil Kinnock but her Tory predecessor Edward Heath. "[N]obody any longer cared what Heath had to say," Young writes about one of Heath's petulant speeches. "The fate he brought on himself was to be patronised and insulted from his own backbenches, by [real] estate agents and car salesmen who were still at school when he was prime minister." You could read that line about "estate agents and car salesmen" as snobbish if you were determined to, though in context it is clearly mocking such snobbery.

Reagan's better half

One of the best parts of the book, in fact, is Young's own discussion of Thatcher's intellect and of intellectuals' attitudes towards her. "Of all postwar prime ministers," Young writes, "she both used intellectuals and exhibited a studied interest in political ideas to a greater extent than any other. . . . Compared with [Harold] Wilson she was an aesthete, compared with [James] Callaghan a personification of the higher sensibilities." Callaghan and Wilson were her Labour predecessors.

Or, of more direct interest to American readers, what about this comparison? "Mrs. Thatcher had all the important qualities of a high-flying American business executive, being hard-working, single-minded, fascinated by detail and a swift master of every brief . . . . Reagan, by contrast, had most of the vices of a languid upper-class Englishman, of the

**The Iron Lady.* Hugo Young. *Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $25.00.*

Michael Kinsley is a senior editor of The New Republic *and a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

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type Mrs. Thatcher spent years trying to exclude from her cabinet."

Young's only note of intellectual mockery about Thatcher is a comment that rather than read a novel,

> *Mrs. Thatcher had all the important qualities of a high-flying American business executive, being hard-working, single-minded, fascinated by detail, and a swift master of every brief. . . . Reagan, by contrast, had most of the vices of a languid upper-class Englishman, of the type Mrs. Thatcher spent years trying to exclude from her cabinet.*

"She would as soon go to bed with a fat government report." Shades of Michael Dukakis taking *Swedish Land-Use Planning* to the beach. But hardly an example of left-wing intellectual snobbery.

Thatcher and Reagan were both enormously successful conservative politicians who dominated their societies during the 1980s. But the differences are crucial. To start, the Britain of the 1970s really was a stultified, dispirited nation in decline, and it really was transformed during the 1980s. America, by contrast, grew faster in the 1970s than it did in the 1980s. The late 1970s certainly was a time of spiritual depression (or "malaise," as it was called) in the United States, but we never suffered the same degree of actual economic decay.

Advanced democracies seem to have two characteristic political problems. One is special-interest gridlock: the ability of organized groups to serve their own interests at the expense of the general interest. Of course interest-group members are members of society as a whole, too, and lose more from the gridlock than they gain from their specific group protection. This was the burden of Mancur Olson's influential book, *The Rise and Decline of Nations*. A second problem goes by the name of "short-term time horizons" or what Richard Darman cloyingly calls "now-nowism": an unwillingness by everyone in society to sacrifice today for a payoff tomorrow.

America has suffered from both these problems. Britain was being destroyed by them. Reagan never addressed either one. Thatcher addressed both. In fact, she positively relished her role as disciplinarian. "The result of buying off trouble," she characteristically lectured, is "simply decline on the installment plan." Young identifies "good housekeeping . . . with its connotations of thrift, prudence, and balanced budgets" as one of the key values Thatcher came to stand for in her own mind and the public's. Certainly that is a concept you do not associate with Ronald Reagan. And Thatcher actually has balanced the British government budget—turned in a surplus, in fact.

Principle differences

Thatcher is in trouble in the polls these days, and many say that the end is in sight. Her problems also provide an illuminating contrast with Reagan. One is her personality. As Young notes, despite three election victories and a good line in populist rhetoric, she has never been personally popular. After more than 10 years, what Young calls her "familiar role of Amazonian scourge and moralist" is getting tiresome to more and more of those who didn't find it grating all along. Reagan's damned amiability, by contrast, could smother even the most determined ideological opponent.

Thatcher's second problem is ideological hubris. What Young calls her "inspirational certainty" sometimes inspires her more than it inspires others and leads her to carry even her good ideas too far. It's what it might be like to have Charlie Peters running the government. For example, having decided that privatization is a Good Thing, and having successfully privatized various nationalized industries such as steel, British Airways, and the telephone company, she is now busy privatizing the water system.

The hallmark of the Reagan administration was not ideological hubris but ideological hypocrisy. Reagan never let conservative zeal stand in the way of his popularity. He convinced the voters they were against "liberalism" and "big government" but didn't actually cut any government program that served the broad middle class. Whereas Thatcher might read a radical proposal from some think tank and then actually propose legislation to implement it, there was little danger that Reagan would ever do either of those things.

Thatcher's greater commitment to ideological principle is ironic since, as Young points out, she came to politics with little more than vague ambition and found her principles thereafter. Reagan's history is the opposite. But when Thatcher found her principles, she stuck to them. That's why, for people who don't share most of those principles—like Hugo Young and most readers of this magazine—reluctant admiration is just the right attitude to have. □

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Huddled Masses or Elite Classes?

Sure, lifetime earned income and average years of schooling are important. But what ever happened to yearning to be free?

by Robert B. Reich

It has become fashionable of late to view immigration as the answer to America's economic ills. "Immigration...can help provide us with whatever skills we may be lacking [and] diminish labor shortages that may be coming our way," enthused Ben Wattenberg and Karl Zinmeister at the American Enterprise Institute's policy conference last December. Just open the borders and—presto—we have just the workers we need to see us through the tough times ahead.

George Borjas, a professor of economics at the University of California at Santa Barbara, has written a short, thoughtful book about immigration that should give the optimists pause. A cure for what ails the economy? It ain't that simple.

Borjas's book is loaded with statistics, inferences, arguments, counter-arguments, qualifications, and stunning conclusions, but let me get right to the heart of the argument. He distinguishes between two categories of immigrants. The first comprises people whose subsequent lifetime earnings in America are less, on average, than lifetime earnings of Americans already here. Most of the people in this category are unskilled, and have fewer years of education than the average American. And a surprisingly large number of them (larger, in proportion to their numbers, than Americans already here) end up on welfare.

The second category of immigrants is people whose subsequent lifetime earnings in the United States are higher than those of Americans already here, who are skilled, have more years of education than the average American, and are very unlikely to end up on welfare. Borjas assumes that we would prefer to attract more of this second category than the first.

New wave

But here's the rub. Since the 1950s, a higher and higher percentage of immigrants to the United States have come from the first category—unskilled, unschooled, and more likely to end up on welfare. In 1950, the typical immigrant had .3 more years of schooling than the average American; by the late 1970s, .7 fewer. In the 1980s, some 10 million people legally immigrated to the United States—more than in any previous decade, and well ahead of the huge 1900-1909 wave that brought in 8.2 million people. But a much larger portion of this recent wave was from the first category of immigrants than in any previous wave. In addition, Borjas estimates that 3 to 4 million illegal immigrants entered the United States, most of them also coming well within category one.

Does this mean that most of the people who immigrate to another country these days are less skilled, educated, and productive than the people who immigrated years ago? Not at all. Borjas contrasts the sort

* *Friends or Strangers: The Impact of Immigrants on the U.S. Economy.* George J. Borjas. *Basic Books, $22.95.*

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of immigrants the United States has been getting with immigrants elsewhere. Besides the United States, the other major destinations for the world's immigrants are Australia and Canada (between 1975 and 1980, the three countries together accounted for about two-thirds of where immigrants went). Australia and Canada have been attracting a much larger proportion from the second category than the United States has. In fact, while our proportion of category one has been rising, their proportion of category two's have been rising. Why? Borjas offers two reasons.

Theory of Relativity

The first reason has to do with laws that determine who gets in. In the 1960s and early 1970s, Canada and Australia changed their systems for allocating visas. Previously, visas had been allocated on the basis of national origin, so that if you were a skilled engineer from India you'd have a much harder time entering these nations than if you were a taxi driver from Great Britain. But after the changes, it was just the reverse. Higher skill and educational attainments received a higher priority, regardless of country of origin.

United States immigration policy has also shifted away from national origin. But, in contrast to Australia and Canada, the United States gives priority to the relatives of Americans, regardless of how skilled or unskilled they may be. This is the legacy of the 1965 amendments to the immigration law, which, as Borjas notes, were passed at a time when the American public was still sensitive to the issues of civil and human rights, which made family unification a central objective of immigration policy. Of the total number of visas that are issued every year, approximately 80 percent now go to close relatives of American citizens or residents. The remaining 20 percent are supposed to be allocated on the basis of skill but, as a practical matter, they typically go to more distant relatives.

What's more, you can bypass the quota system entirely and become an American citizen if you are an immediate relative (spouse or child) of someone already here legally. In 1987, more immigrants entered as immediate relatives than entered under all the family reunification provisions combined. Combining these numbers with the number of people allocated restricted-entry visas reveals that only 4 percent of the people who legally immigrated to the United States in 1987 were allowed in because of their skills. The rest—96 percent—came in because they had relations here.

Borjas concludes that the 1965 amendments have resulted in a sizable decline in the quality of immigrants coming to the United States. The effect is rather like compounded interest. A somewhat small number of unskilled and unschooled immigrants results, over time, in a huge number, once their relations get here, and then their relation's relations, and so on. In the 1960s, more than 50 percent of new immigrants came from Europe, and most had higher lifetime earnings than the Americans they joined. By the 1970s, however, more than 80 percent of the new immigrants to our shores came from Asia and Latin America—among them Mexicans, Filipinos, and Koreans, who, Borjas tells us, typically have lower lifetime earnings than the Americans already here.

Borjas concludes that we're losing the competitive race for skilled immigrants. While Australia and Canada actively solicit skilled people from around the world, even going so far as to sell visas to residents of Hong Kong (now shopping for new places to live in anticipation of 1997, when Hong Kong becomes part of the People's Republic of China), the United States remains mired in an inflexible system based upon humanitarian, rather than economic, concerns.

Money talks, everyone walks

So, what we should do is adopt the Australian and Canadian system, right? Not so fast. Even if the law makes it easier for skilled immigrants to come here, there's no guarantee that they will. In fact, argues Borjas, they probably won't. Herewith the second reason why we're no longer attracting immigrants from category two. Regardless of what the law might permit, only people who gain from immigration will want to immigrate, and the United States is no longer as attractive a place for skilled people to come to as it was decades ago.

Referring to a number of studies and econometric techniques, Borjas attempts to demonstrate that highly skilled people want to move where they can get relatively higher returns on their skills, while unskilled people want to move to where they can earn relatively more on their unskills. It sounds logical enough, but the implication is not comforting. Highly skilled people will want to leave egalitarian countries where they in effect subsidize their unskilled compatriots and to immigrate to where the income gap is wider and where they thus receive a relatively higher return. Unskilled people will want to do precisely the reverse—moving away from where the gap is wide and to where they can be subsidized by highly skilled people. Thus, the typical immigrant to the United States in the 1950s came from a European social-democratic country in which the ratio of income accruing to the top 10 percent of households relative to

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the bottom 20 percent was 1:11.2. The typical immigrant in the 1970s came from a highly segmented society in which this measure of inequality was 1:16.1.

By this logic, the United States has a slight advantage over Canada, since we have a less equal distribution of income. Thus, unskilled Americans are relatively better off in Canada. In fact, several studies have confirmed that the immigrant flow from the United States to Canada has been composed of relatively unskilled Americans seeking the protection and social insurance that the Canadian economy provides, while Canadians who have immigrated to the United States are predicted to have much higher lifetime earnings while here than American natives.

What are we to make of all this? Borjas seems to be saying (although he takes pains not to say it too directly) that if we want to have a more egalitarian distribution of income within the United States and also allow families to be reunited with their foreign members, then we'll have to content ourselves with new immigrants who are unskilled, relatively unproductive, and likely to spend part of their lives on welfare. On the other hand, the way to attract more skilled and educated immigrants is clear: Permit rich Americans to get even richer, poor Americans to become even poorer, and allow into the country only those meeting certain criteria for skill and education. The boys at the American Enterprise Institute could hardly wish for a more convenient rationale for their neoconservative agenda.

Are we then faced with this rather discomfiting trade-off between social justice and economic growth? Only if we neglect to consider the identity of the "we" who's making the choice in the first place.

Most discussions about what must be done to spur "our" national economic growth leave out the important pronoun question, which was asked by Tonto after the Lone Ranger informed him "We're surrounded." To wit: "Who's *we*, kemosabe?" Borjas assumes that an influx of skilled (as opposed to unskilled) immigrants would help us, but he never examines exactly who the "us" is who would be helped. Surely not unskilled immigrants, who now can't enter the United States legally. Presumably not skilled immigrants, who have it made regardless of whether America opens its borders to them. The group he's referring to must be those already living in America.

But some of the people already living here have family members on the outside, many of whom couldn't easily immigrate if the United States limited

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The nation needs good citizens as much as, if not more than, it needs good skills. In the long run, given half a chance, it is the individuals who are most grateful to be here who are most likely to benefit us all.

entry to skilled workers. Likewise, some people already living in America are poor, and many would become even poorer if the nation were to reduce or eliminate income transfers from the more wealthy. Thus, the cost of attracting more skilled immigrants to these shores would fall especially heavily on these two groups of Americans, who nonetheless might benefit, on balance, from such a policy if they were to share in the additional productivity and economic growth induced by the new immigrants.

We the people of . . . ?

But here again, the global economy intrudes. With money and technology so footloose, there's no longer any guarantee that wealth and knowledge produced within the borders of a nation will benefit compatriots to any greater extent than anyone else in the world. It is partly for this reason that "trickle-down" economics has proved such a cruel hoax. America's highly skilled, whose insights are in great demand around the globe, are getting richer; America's unskilled are getting poorer. Nor would less fortunate Americans benefit from more generous income transfers from the new group of skilled immigrants, since such transfers will have been ruled out in order to attract skilled immigrants in the first place. But perhaps skilled and wealthy Americans would now be more willing to invest in the education and training of poor Americans, thus rendering them more productive? Don't hold your breath. For precisely the same reasons that everything else now moves so easily across borders, skilled Americans are less likely to have an enlightened self-interest in enhancing the productivity of the unskilled. Increasingly, the economic fates of skilled Americans are linked to worldwide enterprise. The skilled engineer living in a wealthy Dallas suburb is apt to be more financially dependent on West German designers, Tokyo financiers, and Mexican fabricators than on unskilled Hispanic-Americans living in downtown Fort Worth. National borders used to define realms of economic interdependence in which citizens had an enlightened self-interest in preparing one another for productive lives. No longer.

What this means is that the premise of Borjas's book—that "we" stand to gain more from skilled immigrants than from unskilled—is becoming less and less obvious. Particularly if the price to be paid for attracting more skilled immigrants is a further diminution in social equality within the United States, coupled with a permanent splintering of immigrant families, there's no reason to suppose that "we" come out ahead. Economic analyses can help reveal different consequences following from different policy choices. But as this book serves to remind us, economics is no help at all in telling us what we should do, or why.

One of the major tasks of nations in the new global economy will be to redefine that "we" of citizenship and the mutual obligations that citizenship represents. The new democracies of Eastern Europe and Latin America will be among the first to grapple openly with these questions, but there is no hiding from them. The United States, in its own elliptic ways, will be forced to struggle with them as well. The next round in the debate over immigration policy will surely serve as an occasion.

When that time arrives, many economists will summon data of a sort that Borjas has offered. Pontificators at the American Enterprise Institute, among other august locations, will conclude that skilled immigrants provide the answer to our problems. The response must be that the nation needs good *citizens* as much as, if not more than, it needs good *skills*. As America once understood, poor people from other lands, desperately yearning to be free, may have a greater claim on this nation's future than well-educated people seeking a higher return on their diplomas. And in the long run, given half a chance, it is precisely these individuals—who are most grateful for the opportunity to be here—who are most likely to benefit us all. They will take their obligations most seriously. □

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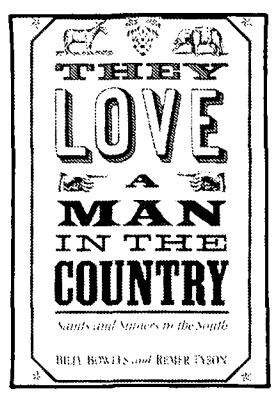

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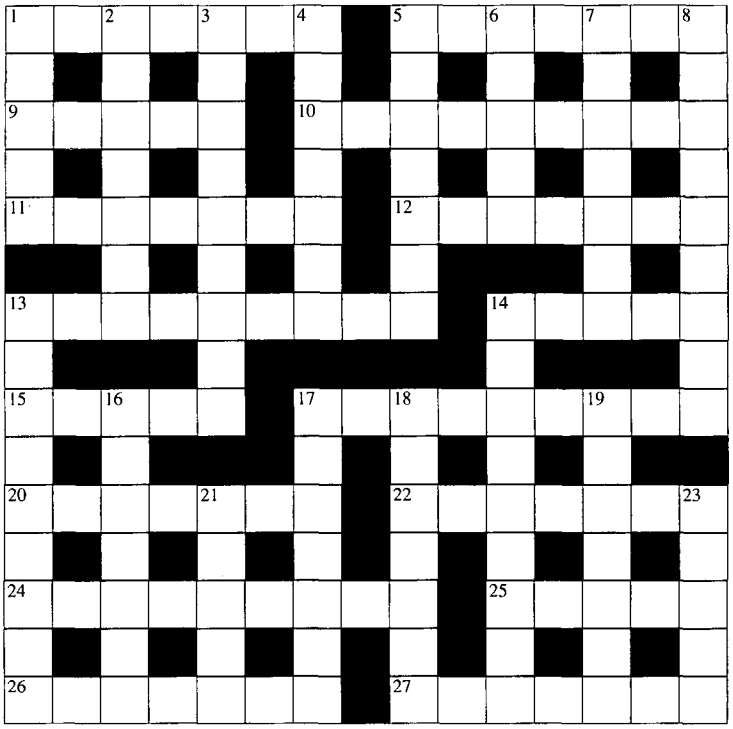
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word.



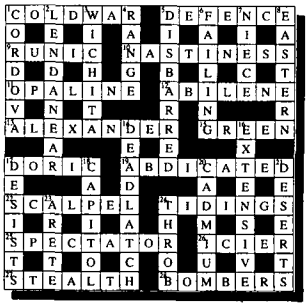
ACROSS

1. Iron Age coming back for former strong man. (7)
5. Maria on parade for unsettled state. (7)
9. Remote place in which to sip chianti between courses. (5)
10. Place to walk and please somehow. (9)
11. Trapped by affected modestly indeed. (7)
12. Hit Iran savagely from unexpected source. (4,3)
13. Struggled to make Don decent. (9)
14. Father in evil country. (5)
15. Mistreat beaus badly. (5)
17. Independent aquatic creature in France. (4,5)
20. Savagely cusses about origin of circus achievement. (7)
22. Understands Gert has moved around a bit. (7)
24. Quits ring in a huff for shower. (9)
25. Make oil go for housing in the North. (5)
26. Special push around old supports. (7)
27. He creates demand for red ink from red pens. (7)

DOWN

1. Would Massachusetts be famous without its senator? (5)
2. Magic lantern approach to historic barrier? (7)
3. Syllogism for Emmy then turning around and heading East. (9)
4. Corrected confused energy demand. (7)
5. Well known for place in grass. (7)
6. Southern city sends note to friend in Paris. (5)
7. Puts right angle in again backwards and falls. (7)
8. Mistake from shifting near brace. (9)
13. Deposed leader around East Secaucus. (9)
14. Card game of sorts breaks up aisle trio. (9)
16. International organization with bad touch is not pre-sentable. (7)
17. Traces ship in blocks. (7)
18 Gets attention of English *Times*. (7)
19. Teased in a particularly pointed way? (7)
21. Disturbed loner put in school. (5)
23. Clean up sort of bad taste around West End of Chicago. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Public affairs books scheduled to be published this month.

Fall from Grace: The Failed Crusade of the Christian Right. Michael D'Antonio. *Farrar, Straus, Giroux, $19.95.* Michael D'Antonio has cut into conservative Christianity and exposed its internal structure with the objectivity of a medical examiner. And yet, in the course of his autopsy, he shows remarkable compassion for the body under his knife. Members of the born-again Christian movement were not hysterical zealots, in his view; rather, they were honest, caring Americans who were overwhelmed by social turmoil and fearful of changes in their homes, communities, and country.

"I'm obsessed with sex," said an Oral Roberts University junior interviewed by D'Antonio. Believing that sex should be saved for marriage, the young man played sports and lifted weights in an effort to control his desire. Decades of changing sexual behavior posed such problems for conservative Christians, and they reacted by taking strong positions against abortion and homosexuality. Another ORU student, recently intimate with a woman, described sex as a demon that had almost captured his soul. Fear seemed to permeate every discussion of sexuality in the born-again community, with many preachers using tragedies like AIDS to "prove" God's displeasure with homosexuals and with a society that allowed the gay community to exist. "AIDS wouldn't be here if we had followed the Bible," said one conservative Christian woman in Houston. Although intolerant and ignorant, such a statement was part of an attempt by born-again Christians to maintain a sense of security and a feeling that life was under control. When old moral lessons were ignored, disaster struck: two of the biggest televangelists, Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart, were brought down by sex-related scandals.

D'Antonio wanders all though the world of the Christian Right, talking, eating, and traveling with members of enormous fundamentalist "mega-churches," workers in Pat Robertson's failed presidential campaign, visitors to the Bakkers's Christian theme park, and even right-wing missionaries in Honduras. He found a couple of characteristics that unite these various groups. First, they shared the conviction that the end times were at hand. "Things are much worse in the world than they have ever been," said a Long Island charismatic named Frank. The problems of modern life could be made bearable only by faith in God's quickly approaching final triumph. "Man may be evil and the world may be crazy," said Frank's wife, Amy, "but at least we know we are saved."

Second, there was the common belief that America had received a divine blessing—a blessing that would be lost if the country did not follow a Christian agenda. "God has blessed America abundantly, but we've turned away from Him," said a political consultant in South Carolina. "If we cross a certain point, He's going to abandon us." Crucial to this born-again agenda was support for school prayer, opposition to abortion, and staunch anti-communism. Conservative Christians hoped Ronald Reagan would establish this orthodox American-ism, but he let them down. Then many dreamed of Pat Robertson in the White House, but his candidacy utterly collapsed soon after the New Hampshire primary.

With the demise of Robertson's campaign came the death of the Christian Right's political hopes, according to D'Antonio. Then the remainder of the born-again movement was infected by scandals among the televangelists and conflict between moderates and conservatives in the powerful Southern Baptist denomination. It would have been easy for a self-proclaimed nonbeliever like D'Antonio to gloat over such developments, but he doesn't. Instead, he remains sensitive to the struggles and dreams of the Christian men and women who had given so much—spiritually, emotionally, and financially—to the born-again movement. Attending a Debby Boone concert in Oklahoma, he sees a group of parents with retarded and physically deformed children and admires the way the parents treat their children lovingly and with great dignity. While in Heritage USA, the Bakkers's theme park, a woman asks, "Are you a born-again Christian?"

"No, I'm not," answers D'Antonio.

"Well, I'll pray for you. And I mean that in the best way."

"Thanks. I know you do."

Such sensitivity strengthens this book and increases the credibility of the story D'Antonio tells.

During the Civil War, an elderly lady rebuked Abraham Lincoln for speaking kindly of his Southern enemies instead of plotting their destruction. "Why madam," said Lincoln, "do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?" In the same spirit, D'Antonio has criticized the Christian Right while eliciting sympathy for the foot soldiers of the born-again movement.

—Henry G. Brinton

Lifetrends: The Future of Baby Boomers and Other Aging Americans. Jerry Gerber, Janet Wolff, Walter Klores, Gene Brown. *Macmillan, $18.95.* This is a nonserious book about a serious subject. Here we are told to expect, for example, that as the retrenchment of Social Security

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and Medicare causes the baby boomers to delay retirement well into their seventies, office coffee breaks will be replaced by meditation breaks. Another far-reaching prediction: "Conference calls on video telephones will also be a frequent occurrence, especially on 'Family Day,' which aging baby boomers will probably make a national holiday by the year 2010."

The authors describe themselves as former creative directors at "some of the country's top advertising firms," who today are partners in "a consulting firm specializing in marketing to the 50-plus audience." This provides a clue to their intentions in writing their book, which seems to have been to establish their credentials as experts on how to sell to the next, very large generation of elderly consumers. It also explains why they equivocate about the truly controversial implications of an aging society, such as the pressures it creates for age-based health care rationing or the likelihood it brings of a more general "war between the generations" in the next century. There's plenty here to chill your aging bones, but the authors seem more interested in how some people might make a buck out of the baby boomers' dismal prospects for old age.

—Phillip Longman

Incident at Howard Beach. Charles J. Hynes, Bob Drury. *Putnam, $22.95.* Howard Beach is many stories—most obviously about race, but also about families and neighborhoods and upbringing; about the media and black activism; about the courts, the police, and organized crime; about cities; about America. This particular book, however, is about an investigation. The result is not unlike an episode of "Colombo." The events of that horrifying December 1986 night (annoyingly referred to throughout the book as "The Incident") are told straightforwardly in the first two chapters. The rest of the book explains how the prosecutors broke the case and put at least some of the young thugs in jail. Written by Charles J. Hynes and Bob Drury, a former New York reporter for *Newsday* (the paper I work for), the book doesn't explore how we got to Howard Beach, only how we got from Howard Beach to a cavernous courtroom on Queens Boulevard.

That odyssey is not without power. What is most compelling about *Incident at Howard Beach* is the story itself. Even someone familiar with the case will still wince at the horrifying details, as if reading them for the first time. There's the kids' battle cry—"There's niggers on the boulevard, let's go fuckin' kill them!" And the cops' racism: The surviving victim, Cedric Sandiford, was roughly searched and questioned by the police who found him bleeding and shaking on the highway that night, as if he were a perpetrator instead of a victim. His wounds went untreated for three hours and when he called his fiancee to tell her that her son, Michael Griffith, had been killed, a cop snatched the phone out of his hand after a few moments, snarling that his

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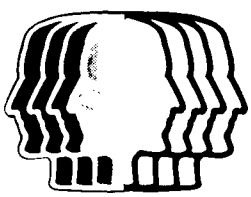

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time was up.

Hynes's unique perspective adds depth to a familiar story. He reveals, for instance, what a chilling effect reputed organized crime chieftain John Gotti and his pals—who call Howard Beach home—had on potential witnesses. Gotti associates were going around collecting money for the gang's defense. One kid's father explained why he couldn't permit his son to testify: "I don't want to come home from work one day and find a slab of cement where my house used to be." And Hynes explains how his prosecutorial team's ingenious legal strategy was almost sabotaged by demands from two black activist lawyers, C. Vernon Mason and Alton Maddox.

Yet one is also disappointed there isn't more of an insider's account. One of the abiding mysteries is why Queens DA John Santucci refused to pursue the case aggressively. Even the investigation detectives were shocked when Santucci sent over a 26-year-old assistant to interview the suspects. As Hynes says, "Sending him to Howard Beach was like sending a rookie out to pitch the seventh game of the World Series." Was Santucci incompetent, stupid, or just counting votes in Howard Beach and places like it? Hynes says Santucci never wanted the case, but what does that mean—that he screwed up the investigation on purpose? One wonders whether Hynes, who recently got elected Brooklyn DA and may have other political ambitions, didn't tiptoe around this one.

And what about Mason and Maddox? Heroic battlers for racial justice to some, lying obstructionists to others, these two are the most intriguing and complex characters in the story. Hynes expresses frustration at how they initially refused to permit Sandiford to talk to the police at a point when the cops were on the verge of making arrests. Yet without their infuriating intransigence in demanding a special prosecutor, we might be reading a book about how fumbling by a Queens DA sparked nasty racial confrontations in New York. Indeed, Hynes himself notes that after hearing Sandiford's wrenching account, he could understand why the fiery Maddox had gotten involved: "New York City, the criminal justice system, the Establishment, none of them had responded to a black man who believed his stepson had been the victim of a lynching . . . . I wasn't just embarrassed; I was sick to my stomach."

Strong words. But does Hynes think the case would have been properly prosecuted if Mason and Maddox hadn't gotten involved?

The case undeniably had a lasting effect on Hynes. While it helped propel him into the Brooklyn DA's office, it also forced him to accept round-the-clock protection and made him an unwelcome face in once-familiar Queens haunts. He, like other New Yorkers, was tossed by the conflicting passions the case aroused. He relates how he was in Boston, watching a TV news report on black marchers in Howard Beach when his red-faced cousin stormed into the room. "What the fuck do they want now," he screamed, daring Hynes to challenge him. At that moment, the phone rang. It was Governor Cuomo's office, alerting Hynes that he might be called in.

There's a numbing avalanche of names, but Hynes spends most of his energy detailing the efforts of the hardworking staff. The "A-team," as he calls them, are a committed, brilliant, sensitive band of lovable prosecutors who are apparently without flaws. We know much more about this TV-perfect group than about the victims, the police, the politicians, the white kids and their families. For instance, one gang member's brother was a New York City cop and his father was a corrections officer; another's dad was a small-time hood with a record and ties to the underworld. Did both kids learn the language of hate at their dinner tables? Are these "typical" middle-class families? If so, God help us.

But there are other chapters that need to be filled in as well. We now have the prosecutor's story, and it's one that's worth hearing. But there are other stories—about shattered lives on both sides of the courtroom, about race relations in the city and the country—that we're still waiting to hear. The case's final chapters have yet to be written. Just this past December, the riot convictions of three of the teens involved were overturned by the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court. And there's a good chance that a controversial decision made by Hynes to challenge the right of defense attorneys to exclude potential jurors solely on the basis of race could mean an appeal of the manslaughter convictions before the U.S. Supreme Court.

—Patricia Cohen

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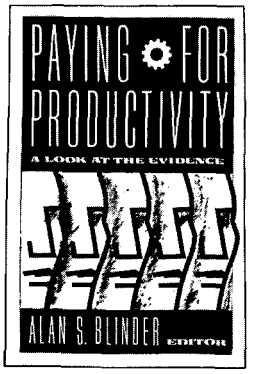

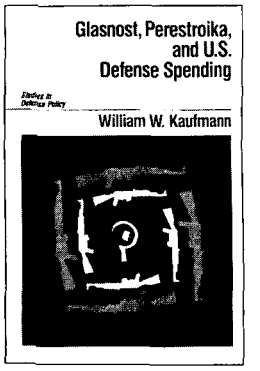

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